MONDAY
April 8, 2024

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Street vendors struggle with wilting produce

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Holiday bookings go up this summer vacation

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Traders rue underpriced onion exports to the UAE

Centre has permitted 24,400-tonne shipments to the country amid ban on exports; exporters allege that selling price is being set too low, triggering windfall profits for selected UAE importers

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

Recent spike: Onion prices have soared in major markets such as the UAE to as high as $1,500 a tonne. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Amid an extended ban on onion exports, farmers and traders are miffed that some shipments allowed by the government to markets such as the UAE have been sold at a pittance, even as global prices have soared, yielding windfall profits for selected importers.

An Indian farmer is being paid just ₹12 to ₹15 for a kg of onions procured for export, which are then being sold in UAE stores for more than ₹120 a kg, exporters alleged.

Fearing a domestic shortage of the politically sensitive crop, the government had imposed a ban on its export in December, extending it indefinitely "till further orders" last month. However, it had kept the window open for exports to countries in response to requests received through diplomatic channels.

On March 1, the Centre permitted the export of 14,400 tonnes of onions to the UAE, with a quarterly cap of 3,600 tonnes. While over 3,000 tonnes of such exports were cleared last month, the Commerce Ministry last week okayed an additional 10,000 tonnes for the UAE, "over and above" the quarterly quota.

Rate mismatch

Usually, global onion prices hover in the $300-400 a tonne range. In recent months, however, rates have soared in major markets such as the UAE to as high as $1,500 a tonne, exacerbated by the export bans imposed by India, Pakistan, and Egypt.

India's recent shipments to the country, however, have been sent at around $500 to $550 a tonne, exporters have learnt.

"UAE importers have already got windfall gains of over ₹300 crore through such shipments, and if this situation continues, another ₹1,000 crore is likely with the additional 10,000-tonne quota opened up now, apart from the gains likely on the additional 3,600 tonnes of export quota available for that country till June," a leading exporter of horticulture produce told *The Hindu*.

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Nirmala's remark vindicates our charge, says State govt.

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In support: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah campaigning for Congress candidate from Bengaluru North Lok Sabha constituency M.V. Rajeev Gowda on Sunday. K. MURALI KUMAR

DROUGHT RELIEF

A day after Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman admitted that there had been delay in releasing drought relief funds to Karnataka, the State government on Sunday slammed the Centre for doing injustice to Karnataka.

The government has already moved the Supreme Court over the delay by the Centre in providing drought relief.

"Thanking" the Finance Minister for acknowledging the injustice done to the State, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said: "Ms. Sitharaman has said that the election has delayed relief but what is the connection between relief and election? We submitted our drought relief appeal four months ago. There was no model code of conduct then and now she has used election as an alibi. She has admitted to the delay in providing relief and in meting out injustice to Karnataka. This justifies Congress MP D.K. Suresh's campaign -- Our tax, our right."

At the election rally in support of Bengaluru North Congress candidate Rajeev Gowda, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said: "(Prime Minister) Narendra Modi tells a lie, (Union Home Minister) Amit Shah tells another lie, and Ms. Sitharaman adds another lie. Will the people's vote be respected if they vote for this party, which is a factory of lies?"

The State has been subjected to extreme injustice in sharing the tax money of the people, the Chief Minister added.

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No Israel embassy is safe, warns Iran

Associated Press
JERUSALEM

A top Iranian military adviser on Sunday warned Israel that none of its embassies were safe following last week's strike in Damascus blamed on Israel that killed two elite Iranian generals.

The remarks by Gen. Rahim Safavi, a military adviser to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, signalled that the attack on a diplomatic mission could be met with a similar response. Israel has not directly acknowledged its involvement.

"None of the embassies of the (Israeli) regime are safe anymore," Gen. Safavi was quoted as saying by the semi-official Tasnim agency. He spoke at a ceremony in Tehran for the generals killed in last week's strike.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel was prepared for any response. "Whoever harms us or plans to harm us, we will harm them," he told a Cabinet meeting.

Israel to pull back some troops

JERUSALEM
Israel's military announced on Sunday it was drawing back some forces from a Hamas stronghold in southern Gaza, bringing troop presence in the territory to one of the lowest levels in six months.
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Rainbow field

Treat to the eyes: Tulips of different colours in full bloom at the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden in Srinagar on Sunday. NISSAR AHMAD

GE outbreak: 13 patients discharged

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute (BMCRI) on Sunday said that 13 out of 14 patients who were in hospital were discharged on Sunday. The girls' hostel of BMCRI has been grappling with an acute gastroenteritis (GE) outbreak.

Overall, 46 out of 47 patients have been discharged, according to BMCRI.

The outbreak primarily affected the H-Block of the hostel. Additionally, one case who is in the Trauma Centre, also reported to be stable, is awaiting culture reports and will be discharged on Monday.

Ramesh Krishna K., Dean and Director of BMCRI, said, "Proactive measures have been taken within the hostel premises. Kitchen facilities have been temporarily closed, with continuous disinfection procedures underway. To ensure the well-being of the students, arrangements have been made to provide food from the Victoria Hospital kitchen."

"Efforts are being made to ensure the availability of clean drinking water by cleaning and servicing the R.O water tanks, with plans to install three additional R.O water filters," he added.

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Modi and Mamata trade barbs over attack on NIA team in Bhupatinagar

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The attack on National Investigation Agency (NIA) officials at Bhupatinagar in West Bengal on Saturday turned into a major political issue ahead of the Lok Sabha election, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday alleging that Central agencies face attacks in the State as the ruling Trinamool Congress wants to protect its corrupt leaders.

"The Trinamool wants its corrupt leaders and extortionists to get a free licence for terror. That is why they indulge in attack when Central agencies arrive here. The Trinamool is a party that wants to trample the rule of law and constitutional norms," Mr. Modi said at a public meeting in Jalpaiguri.

> The Trinamool wants its corrupt leaders and extortionists to get a free licence of terror. That is why they indulge in attack when Central agencies arrive here
>
> **NARENDRA MODI,** Prime Minister

> They are trying to arrest our candidates and booth-level leaders... Ram Navami is approaching and now even if a cracker explodes, the NIA will take over the investigation
>
> **MAMATA BANERJEE,** West Bengal Chief Minister

Earlier in the day, the Trinamool Congress held a press conference alleging that BJP leader Jitendra Tiwari met an NIA official on March 26 after the Lok Sabha election was announced.

"Experience the unfolding alliance between the @NIA_India and @BJP4Bengal, orchestrating conspiracies against Trinamool leaders amid the Model Code of Conduct. While this collusion persists, the ECI stands by, conspicuously silent, neglecting its duty to ensure fair play," Trinamool general secretary Abhishek Banerjee said in a social media post.

Addressing a rally at Purulia, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said, "They are trying to arrest our candidates and booth-level leaders... Ram Navami is approaching and now even if a cracker explodes, the NIA will take over the investigation."

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This poll season, MSMEs pursue GST reforms with candidates

M. Soundariya Preetha
COIMBATORE

More than six years since the Narendra Modi regime rolled out the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the issue remains a bone of contention in several MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) clusters in different parts of the country. Reduction in GST rates is a core demand for representatives of MSMEs as the country gears up for the Lok Sabha election.

According to government data, there are seven crore MSMEs across sectors in the country and an estimated 12 crore people are dependent on it. "If these units do well, all those who depend on it will benefit," Sudhir Jha, national convener, All India Manufacturers Organisation and vice-president of the MSME Development Forum, said.

Many affected: There are seven crore MSMEs across the country and an estimated 12 crore people are dependent on it. M.A. SRIRAM

However, over the years, GST slabs have paralysed many of these units. "MSMEs do not have the resources or understanding of GST mainly because most of these units are run by a single person," he said. Such small units are technically exempted from GST because of low turnover. But they are suppliers to a larger, GST-registered industry and hence are expected to provide at least minimum documentation.

Those micro or small-scale units that are unable to do so are losing business, Mr. Jha said.

In the MSME clusters in Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu and Ludhiana in Punjab, industrial associations have submitted their demands related to GST to candidates contesting the elections in the respective constituencies.

The main demand in Coimbatore is the reduction of GST on labour charges (job work) undertaken by the micro and small-scale units in the engineering sector.

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GST NEEDS REFORM: KELKAR
» PAGE 14

Rehab and recovery — the Rs that helped Sathiyan regain his mojo

With a difficult past behind him, the two-time senior National champion wants to improve his ranking and hopes to produce a good show at the Paris Olympics

GETTY IMAGES

K. Keerthivasan

It was a phase G. Sathiyan had never experienced before.

Having enjoyed a career-high of World ranking of 24 in 2019, Sathiyan was going through one of the worst times of his professional table tennis career four years later.

A severe pain to his lower back and knee in the latter half of 2023 was threatening to pull him down, especially with the Paris Olympics qualification looming large. Prioritising tournaments over recovery, Sathiyan played in quite a few WTT Contender and Star Contender events, only to lose early in many events which made matters worse.

In March 2024, the 31-year-old got back his sagging confidence when he bagged the men's singles crown at the WTT Feeder tournament in Beirut, defeating Chuang Chih-Yuan of Taipei, the top seed, in the final. The title, his fourth overall and first since 2021, pushed him up by 34 places wherein he reached No. 60 in the world rankings. He is the second ranked Indian now behind Sharath (WR 35) in men's singles International rankings.

Devastated

"I was devastated," admitted the Commonwealth and Asian Games medallist, on the injuries. "This was the first time I was saddled with a major injury in my career."

The best part about Sathiyan is his keenness to improve and introspect when the chips are down that separates him from others.

Sitting down with his coach S. Raman, he dug deep into his game to understand what he was doing wrong. Separately, he made a conscious decision to move to Primal Patters, headed by renowned fitness trainer Shanker Basu and backed by physio Navneeth. Slowly and steadily, Sathiyan started to reap the rewards.

"I started to focus more on recovery, an area I neglected as a youngster. I started doing ice bath, massages, strength training and physiotherapy. My routine was recovery, fitness and practice. Once I started to do that regularly, I was feeling better and then I started to build on it," explained Sathiyan.

Basu also tweaked the routines that Sathiyan was used to till then. "I changed my warm-up routines. My rehabilitation and fitness program, too, changed. I focused more on my diet and realised the need to be more disciplined when you travel. Of course, on court I was focused. Off-court I made some changes," added Sathiyan.

Raman, too, has played a huge part in Sathiyan's career. The 54-year-old Olympian encourages Sathiyan to challenge his coaching style and there are instances of the two challenging each other on the best way to go forward as far as technique and fitness were concerned.

"Raman sir went back to the basics. Nowadays, youngsters have become aggressive and the key was to adapt. Now, players world ranked in 100-150 challenge the top players. They are not scared. We worked on adding some skills and rectify quite a few technical mistakes related to timing and speed," said Sathiyan.

In the singles semifinals against Chuang in Beirut, Sathiyan was on top of his game in counter-attacks and blocks. During long rallies, the Indian was consistent and was excellent in defence and in unleashing forehand top spin winners when it warranted.

Sathiyan defeated Manav Thakkar in the final and the next day without a break, he played in the WTT Feeder II in Beirut, where he reached the semifinals.

Sathiyan revealed that he was able to play back-to-back tournaments because of the training routines provided by Sankar. "There was not even a day's break. After the WTT Beirut I event, I started playing the next day. Six days of continuous playing. I have not done it before, playing in two Feeder events back-to-back," he said.

Explaining the chronology of his injury and recovery, Sathiyan said: "After the Senior Nationals in December 2023, I started to do proper rehab and went back to do basic work on my technical flaws, which took time. Then, I started to work on my game mentally and physically. That time was the critical phase of qualifying period for the Paris Olympics. After January, I started to feel better about my game. I was getting into my rhythm at the World team championships in February in Busan. I was playing well in the Singapore Smash tournament, too. In fact, I was leading by two games to one and 5-1 up in the third game against France's Lillian Bardet in the first qualifying round before I lost the game and the match. After January, I was in a much better shape physically. And I had better clarity."

According to Sathiyan, the changes in the points system by World Table Tennis also played a part in his rankings going down. "WTT announced in January that only points accrued from June 2023 will stand and not the usual two-year period," he said.

Sathiyan further emphasised that WTT stopped allowing any window for training in its calendar unlike earlier times when there was a window for training and practice that helped players to recoup.

"This was a new challenge for us. We had to adapt and hence do training in-between tournaments," he said.

The last three years, said Sathiyan, has been non-stop with major tournaments. With three events – Tokyo Olympics (2021), Commonwealth Games (2022), Asian Games (2023) and now the Paris Olympics (2024) – he said, there was hardly any time for recovery, one of the many reasons that led to him being injured. "This was the first time that three big events happened every year, 2021, '22 & '23. It was a huge challenge. I am happy that I have recovered and progressed well," he said.

Whenever Sathiyan has lost his form, he has relied on smaller events to bail him out. After a poor show in the Tokyo Olympics, he won the ITTF Czech Open as the top seed. This time, when he was again down and out, he took part in the WTT Feeder event in Beirut and won it.

On the rationale of participating in lower tier events when he loses his touch, Sathiyan replied, "I think for me, the concept is to play more matches. In Feeder events, you get to play more matches. In Contender events, the level is high and you directly play at a high level. When you are not in good form, you either play a tournament in India or play a Feeder event. That's the best way to progress and gain confidence."

However, he said Feeder events are becoming tougher as players outside the top 30 in the world play and the competition is high. "The Feeder events concepts have changed. Though there are no World top 30 players, six players from 31 to 50 are allowed. Feeders are as good as Contender events," he insisted.

The two-time senior National champion wants to improve his singles rankings and enter the top 50 in the world to brighten his chance of sealing a spot in the men's team event for Paris Olympics. That, though, will not be easy. Even though Sathiyan is ranked two behind Sharath in International rankings, he is ranked five in Indian (domestic) rankings and are two others breathing down Sathiyan's throat. "It's a tight race in men's. Manav Thakkar (63), Harmeet Desai (66) and I are neck-to-neck in world rankings. It's a healthy competition. We will know the composition of the team when the Table Tennis Federation of India announces it on May 16," he said.

Sathiyan is also eyeing a berth in mixed doubles with Manika Batra for the Paris Olympics when the two-day World mixed doubles Olympic qualification tournament begins on April 11 in Havirov (Czech Republic). "We are ranked 16 in the Race to Olympics rankings. Four pairs from Havirov will directly qualify. The qualification (for Olympics) looks difficult. We are confident of putting up a fight," he said.

Setbacks have always got the best out of Sathiyan. He will be hoping he will come out, unscathed.

THE GIST

- A severe pain to his lower back and knee in the latter half of 2023 threatened to pull Sathiyan down, especially with the Paris Olympics qualification looming large
- Coach Raman has played a huge part in Sathiyan's career. The 54-year-old Olympian encourages the ward to challenge his coaching style
- Sathiyan and Manika will look for a mixed doubles berth in the Paris Games at the two-day qualification tournament in Havirov (Czech Republic) from April 11

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Street vendors struggle with wilting produce, searing heat

As the city's maximum temperature scales new heights, street vendors are finding it tough. Many have resorted to conducting their business in shaded areas, while some others are using hats and umbrellas, and others have changed the business hours

BEATING THE HEAT

Jayanth R.
BENGALURU

I have been selling vegetables on a pushcart for the past 10 years. I have never seen such heat here," said Chowdappa, a vendor, while pushing a vegetable cart on another hot day in Bengaluru. "Vegetables wilt quickly in the summer. Consumers will not buy vegetables if these are not fresh. If customers don't buy, we will lose a lot of money. I go to K.R. Market at 5 a.m. and buy vegetables and start selling it in Basavanagudi around 7 a.m. I will go home around 11 a.m. As the temperature rises, it becomes difficult to push the cart and conduct the business," he said.

"Earlier, I used to trade greens all day. But, now the greens completely wilt by noon. So many days, I have thrown away the wilted greens," Karpagam, who sells green leafy vegetables, said.

As Bengaluru's maximum temperature scales new heights, street vendors, like others whose work is primarily outdoors, are struggling.

Many have resorted to doing business in shaded areas, while some are using hats and umbrellas, and some have changed their business hours.

"I live in Kengeri and sell vegetables in Jayanagar extension. If possible, I will bring food from home. Otherwise, I depend on a hotel for breakfast and lunch. Customers come to buy vegetables only in the morning and evening because of the intense heat. So, I can't go home to rest. When it's sunny, I sleep on the footpath under my pushcart. However, accessing toilets is a serious problem. We have to find a place where there is a public toilet," said Anita, a vegetable vendor.

> When it's sunny, I sleep on the footpath under my pushcart. However, accessing toilets is a serious problem. We have to find a place where there is a public toilet.
>
> **ANITA,**
> A vegetable vendor.

For those selling flowers too, it is a big challenge. "Owing to the low yield of flowers due to summer, the amount coming to the market has also declined. So, even if we go to the market early, many times we don't get flowers and even if you get them, you have to pay more. Then there is the problem of the rising heat, which is making the flowers wilt faster. Many times, we have to discard the wilted flowers resulting in losses. Thankfully, with Ugadi approaching, business is expected to be good. The real challenge is how to keep the flowers fresh," said Renukamma, a flower seller.

During summer, the demand for fruits and tender coconuts is high.

However, traders are worried that owing to the rise in temperature, they will also lose their taste and freshness.

"There is huge demand for tender coconuts. However, it is better if they are fresh," said Seenappa, a vendor.

On the other hand, some street vendors have expressed outrage against the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) for not providing adequate rehabilitation after eviction.

"After being evicted from Jayanagar 4th Block, we are struggling to carry out business. The BBMP has failed to make alternative arrangements for us," said Subramani, a street vendor from Jayanagar.

Restful shade: Street vendors take a nap on their carts in Bengaluru on Sunday. SUDHAKARA JAIN

Come rain or shine: A vendor selling vegetables with her head covered to protect herself from the sun. K. MURALI KUMAR

Taking precaution: Street vendors using umbrellas to sell their wares in and around K.R. Market, as the mercury levels rise. K. MURALI KUMAR

Vegetables, flowers, and fruits get costly ahead of Ugadi

Tenzin Yangkey and K. Sowmya
BENGALURU

Markets in Bengaluru were bustling with customers during the weekend ahead of Ugadi on Tuesday. However, the festival spirit was slightly dampened by the increase in the prices of vegetables, fruits, and flowers owing to the supply crunch caused by the drought and the heat conditions.

The price of beans, which was ₹50 to ₹60 per kg in wholesale markets around two weeks ago, has gone up to ₹70 per kg, whereas carrots which were selling between ₹40 and ₹50 per kg, are now selling at ₹60 and ₹70 per kg.

Prices of other vegetables like capsicum, brinjal, and tomato have gone up by ₹10 per kg.

Heat damage

Traders note that while the prices of capsicum and carrot have particularly gone up this season, they also have to throw away a lot of carrots as they are rotting quickly owing to the heat.

"Owing to the heat damage, a lot of the unsold vegetables have to be disposed of quickly," said Zakhir A., a vegetable vendor at K.R. Market.

The prices of flowers on the other hand have doubled for the festival. Button roses and *sevanthige* (chrysanthemums) are both selling at ₹300 per kg while jasmine and *kanakambara* (crossandra) are selling at ₹800 to ₹1,000 per kg.

> The limited produce because of the weather conditions has affected the markets this year.
>
> **SHIVANNA,**
> A flower trader in K.R. Market

Speaking about the reason for the price rise, Shivanna, a flower trader in K.R. Market, said: "The limited produce because of the weather conditions has affected the markets this year".

With Ramzan going on, the prices of fruits have been fluctuating the last month. There has been a rise in the sale of oranges, apples, grapes, and mangoes, traders noted.

On Sunday, the prices of some fruits went up by ₹50 per kg. Apples, which were previously priced at ₹160 per kg, were selling at ₹220 per kg at Russel Market in Shivajinagar. Some mango varieties which were being sold at ₹150 were also selling at ₹200 per kg on Sunday.

With cultivation going down by almost 50% in the major horticulture belt around Bengaluru, the prices of vegetables, fruits, and flowers have been up for quite some time now. In the absence of rains, these prices are expected to go further up in the upcoming weeks.

Prices of vegetables

	Price (per kg)
Beans	₹70
Carrot	₹60 - ₹70
Brinjal	₹35
Capsicum	₹60 - ₹70
Tomato	₹ 30

Prices of flowers

Button Rose	₹300
Sevanthige (Chrysanthemum)	₹300
Kanakambara (Crossandra)	₹800 – ₹1,000
Jasmine	₹800 – ₹1,000

Prices of fruits

Apple	₹220
Banana	₹40
Mango	₹200

Tyre godown gutted in accidental fire at Chamarajapet

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Officials suspect an electrical short circuit could be reason for mishap

A tyre godown situated at Gavipura in Chamarajapet was gutted in an accidental fire that broke out early on Sunday. As there was no one inside the godown and it was locked, no casualties were reported.

The fire broke out around 4.30 a.m. and neighbours heard a burst. They came out to find that fire had engulfed the godown.

As the godown had stored thousands of tyres, tubes and plastic material, the fire spread rapidly and the entire godown was gutted. Five fire tenders rushed to the spot and after five hours of struggle, brought the fire under control.

The officials suspect an electrical short circuit could be the reason behind the accident, but a probe is on to ascertain the exact reason.

BMTC driver sleeping at bus stand assaulted by armed gang over trivial argument

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The victim sustained multiple injuries to his head, eyes and hand, and was admitted to hospital

A BMTC bus conductor-cum-driver sustained injuries after an armed gang attacked him over a trivial row at the KS layout bus stand recently.

The victim, Nagendra, sustained multiple injuries to his head, eyes and hand, and was admitted to hospital.

According to the police, the victim had returned from his night shift to the bus stand and slept in the bus. The accused, armed with weapons, came to the bus stand and created a ruckus, which disturbed Nagendra, who was sleeping. Nagendra shouted at them objecting to their unruly behaviour.

Enraged by this, the gang attacked Nagendra after a heated argument and then fled the scene after the other staff rushed to Nagendra's help, said the police.

Based on a complaint, the KS Layout police have registered a case of assault against the accused and efforts are on to track them down based on the CCTV camera footage, a senior police official said.

Literature festival held

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Christ (Deemed-to-be-University) organised a three-day literature festival from April 4 to 6 with sustainability as its guiding theme. It was inaugurated by Vice-Chancellor Rev. Dr. Fr. Jose C.C.

The fest concluded with a valedictory ceremony on April 6.

भारत सरकार / Government of India
अंतरिक्ष विभाग / Department of Space
द्रवनो दनप्रणाली केंद्र / LIQUID PROPULSION SYSTEMS CENTRE
एचएएलप्प्स्टेज, 80 फीट रोड / HAL II STAGE,
80 FEET ROAD, बेंगलूरु / BANGALORE-560 008.
फोनसं. / Phone No.080 25037171. ई–मेल / Email:purchase@lpscb.gov.in

विज्ञापन संदर्भ सं./Advt. Ref. No.: द्र.नो.प्र.के.बें/LPSCB/ईओआई/EOI/02-24 तिथि/Date: 08.04.2024

प्रस्ताव / रुचि की अभिव्यक्ति के लिए अनुरोध
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL / EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

द्र. नो. प्र. के. (बें) में दाब ट्रांसड्यूसरों के संविरचन, समुच्चयन, अंशांकन, परीक्षण एवं इनकी सुपुर्दगी के लिए रुचि की अभिव्यक्ति।

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR FABRICATION, ASSEMBLY, CALIBRATION, TESTING AND DELIVERY PRESSURE TRANSDUCERS AT LPSC (B).

निर्धारित तिथियाँ / SCHEDULE

ईओआई की तिथि / EoI Date : 08.04.2024
नियत तिथि / Due Date : 07.05.2024

सभी प्रस्ताव मोहरबंद वलफाफे में "क्रय व भंडार अधिकारी प्रशासन बिल्डिंग, द्रव नोदन प्रणाली केंद्र, बेंगलूरु - 560008" को पंजीकृत डाकघ्कूरियरघ्सीधी सुपुर्दगी के माध्यम से बोली प्रस्तुतीकरण की नियत तिथि या उससे पहले प्रस्तुत किए जाएँ।

All Proposals in sealed cover should be sent to "Purchase and Stores Officer, Administration Building, Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre, Bengaluru - 560008" through registered post / courier / direct delivery on or before bid submission due date.

हस्ताक्षरित / Signed
क्रय व भंडार अधिकारी / Purchase & Stores Officer

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY G2C
E-Tender Notice No.: ECN-07-2024
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following work:

Name of work	Approx. Value
Shifting/Modification of Existing 66KV UG Cable 1&2 D/C Hebbal 'C' Station, Infringing the Proposed Construction of New Diversion Road for Re-Development Work of Bengaluru Cantonment Railway Station.	Rs. 1,89,03,960.62

Last date for submission of bids : Upto 11:00 Hrs. on 19-04-2024
For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in
Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer (Construction) Bengaluru Cantonment
PUB/11/AAD/PRB/SWR/2024-25
South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRRLY

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY G2C
E-Tender Notice No: 11-MYS 2023-24
Dated: 28-03-2024
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following work:

Item of work	Approx. Value
5 watt VHE Digital Walkie Talkie Set (Tender No. L9245265)	Rs. 1,31,00,000/-

Last date for submission of bids: Upto 10:30 Hrs. on 24-04-2024
For details log on : www.ireps.gov.in
Keep visiting the website for any corrigendum till closing date
Senior Divisional Materials Manager Mysuru
PUB/01/AAD/PRB/SWR/2024-25
South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRRLY

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY G2C
E-Tender Notice No. 01-CWS-MYSS-2024-25
Dated: 02-04-2024
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following work:

Item of work	Approx. Value
Maintenance of Bio toilet tanks at Central Workshop, South Western Railway, Mysuru for a period of 02 years	Rs. 58,16,184/-

Last date for submission of bids: Upto 17.00 Hrs. on 23-04-2024
For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in
Deputy Chief Workshop Manager Mysuru Workshop
PUB/07/AAD/PRB/SWR/2024-25
South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRRLY

भारत सरकार - अंतरिक्ष विभाग / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA - DEPARTMENT OF SPACE
निर्माण एवं अनुरक्षण समूह, एसडीएससी-शार / CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE GROUP, SDSC-SHAR
श्रीहरिकोटा / नेल्लूर (जिला), आं.प्र. / SRIHARIKOTA - 524124

संक्षिप्त ई–निविदा सूचना / Brief E-TENDER NOTICE

ई–निविदा सूचना सं. / e- Tender Notice No.CMG/C/CON248701 तिथि/ Date. 03.04.2024

भारत के राष्ट्रपति की ओर से "चांदीपुर, उड़ीसा में पर्यावरणीय एवं अंतरिक्ष विज्ञान अनुसंधान सुविधा (ए एस आर एफ) का निर्माण–सिविल एवं जन स्वास्थ्य कार्य।" (₹566 लाख); के लिए ई–निविदा के माध्यम से मद दर निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती हैं।निविदा दस्तावेज 22.04.2024 को 14:30 बजे तक डाउनलोड किए जा सकते हैं। विस्तृत सूचना हेतु इच्छुक निविदाकार हमारी वेबसाइट www.isro.gov.in या www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO पर जाएं।

On behalf of President of India, Item Rate tenders are invited through e-tendering for "Construction of Atmospheric & Space Science Research Facility (ASRF) Building at Chandipur, Odisha - Civil & PH works." (₹566 Lakhs); Tender documents can be downloaded up to 22.04.2024, 14:30 hrs. Interested tenderers may visit www.isro.gov.in or www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO for details.

हस्ताक्षरित- समूह प्रधान, सीएमजी / एसडीएससी शार / Sd/- GROUP HEAD, CMG / SDSC SHAR

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that my Client **Mrs.M.N.GEETHA and Mr.JAICHANDAN.K,** has negotiated with **Mr.H.V.RAMESH,** son of Mr.Chikka Venkataramana Reddy, for the purchase of Schedule Property mentioned below herein.

The owner aforementioned has represented to my client that he as the absolute right, title and interest in the Schedule Property to the exclusion of any other person. The owners as also represented that the Schedule Property is not the subject matter of any claims, litigation, mortgage, charge, lease, or any encumbrance whatsoever,

In the event of the existence of any claim, litigation, charge, encumbrance etc., over the Schedule Property by any person, firm, institution or company, I do hereby call upon them to file their Objection to the same with me, in writing with documentary proof to substantiate the same, within 10 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which, my Client will presume the representations of the Owner to be true and proceed with the transaction. Any claims made thereafter will not be entertained.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of Property bearing Site/Plot No.107, assigned with Katha No.411/325/107, and PID No.150200102700900573, measuring East to West : 12.19 meter (40 Feet) and North to South : 18.288 meter (60 Feet), Totally 222.97 Sq meter or 2400 Sq ft., Situated at Handenahalli Village, Sarjapura Hobli, Anekal Taluk, Bangalore District, which is formed in Sy No.41, 42 and 73/2, in duly converted land from Agricultural Purposes to Non-Agricultural Residential purposes, by the Assistant Commissioner Bangalore South Sub Division Bangalore vide conversion order No. ALN/SR(S)51/2004-05, dated: 09-03-2005; ALN/SR(S)53/2004-05, dated: 09-03-2005; and ALN/SR(S)52/2004-05, dated: 10-03-2005, and the layout plan also approved by the BMRDA vide its letter No. LAO-139/2005-06, dated:31-03-2006. and Bounded by :

East By : Plot No.106,
West By : Site No.108,
North By : Road
South By : Site No.109 & 110

PALANETHRA .N, Advocate,
Office at No.435, 2nd Floor, 27th Main, HSR Layout,
1st Sector, Bengaluru -560 102,
Mobile No.91413 45621; 73490 85757

BENGALURU
DATED: 08.04.2024

भारत सरकार / Government of India
अंतरिक्ष विभाग / Department of Space
द्रवनो दनप्रणाली केंद्र / LIQUID PROPULSION SYSTEMS CENTRE
एचएएलप्प्स्टेज, 80 फीट रोड / HAL II STAGE,
80 FEET ROAD, बेंगलूरु / BANGALORE-560 008.
फोनसं. / Phone No.080 25037171. ई–मेल / Email:purchase@lpscb.gov.in

विज्ञापन संदर्भ सं./Advt. Ref. No.: द्र.नो.प्र.के.बें/LPSCB/ईओआई/EOI/01-24 तिथि/Date: 08.04.2024

प्रस्ताव / रुचि की अभिव्यक्ति के लिए अनुरोध
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL / EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

द्र. नो. प्र. के. (बें) में लेवल संवेदकों (यू एस एल एस व एच डी एस) के संविरचन,समुच्चयन, परीक्षण एवं इनकी सुपुर्दगी के लिए रुचि की अभिव्यक्ति।

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR FABRICATION, ASSEMBLY, TESTING AND DELIVERY OF LEVEL SENSORS (USLS & HDS) AT LPSC (B).

निर्धारित तिथियाँ / SCHEDULE

ईओआई की तिथि / EoI Date : 08.04.2024
नियत तिथि / Due Date : 07.05.2024

सभी प्रस्ताव मोहरबंद वलफाफे में "क्रय व भंडार अधिकारी प्रशासन बिल्डिंग, द्रव नोदन प्रणाली केंद्र, बेंगलूरु - 560008" को पंजीकृत डाकघ्कूरियरघ्सीधी सुपुर्दगी के माध्यम से बोली प्रस्तुतीकरण की नियत तिथि या उससे पहले प्रस्तुत किए जाएँ।

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हस्ताक्षरित / Signed
क्रय व भंडार अधिकारी / Purchase & Stores Officer

How genetics is revealing the biology of skin colour is more than skin-deep

Advances in genomics are improving our understanding of skin pigmentation. In a paper published recently by *Nature Genetics*, for example, researchers used genome editing and chromosomal conformational capture to expand the repertoire of genes we know to be involved in processes driving pigmentation diversity

Sridhar Sivasubbu
Vinod Scaria

Scientists widely believe exposure to ultraviolet light from the sun has been the dominant driver of skin colour. CHURCH OF THE KING/UNSPLASH

THE GIST

Scientists believe exposure to the sun has been the dominant driver of skin colour. Colour has also displayed a close connection to latitude, which is correlated with ultraviolet exposure

Dark-skinned humans evolved from apes around 1.2 million years ago by shedding hair and adapting to ultraviolet radiation. Skin colour is also one of the more striking phenotypes in humans, being related to their migration and adaptation as they moved out of Africa 100,000 years ago

Modern-day human skin colour developed out of natural selection. Europeans and East Asians adapted to have lighter skin through independent processes. Some evidence has been found for natural selection in Europeans around 11,000–19,000 years ago

Skin, with its wide spectrum of textures, hues, and histories, has long captivated the imagination of poets and storytellers. It has served as a canvas for the expression of beauty, identity, and cultural symbols. The diversity of skin colour across human populations is a product of human genetics, the migration of peoples, and the complex interplay between genes and the environment.

Together with its colour, skin opens a window into the underlying human pathophysiology, and not just because it's the largest organ – and has, as a result, been the subject of many scientific and medical investigations as well. The natural colour of human skin and the changes therein help clinicians diagnose a number of medical conditions. For example, genetic defects can result in the absence of pigmentation by birth, such as albinism; partial or complete depigmentation can also result in disorders like vitiligo. A number of drugs, including antimalarials and chemotherapy agents, also cause skin pigmentation.

But for all of skin's significance and wonder, its colour has also been the basis of social hierarchies, racism, and other forms of discrimination. Recognising the biological basis of skin and celebrating the diversity of skin colour could instead foster a deeper appreciation of human differences and promote inclusivity.

Light and dark skin

The pigment melanin determines the colour of the skin. It is produced by cells called melanocytes. A number of genes and factors influence the type and size of melanin particles as well as their production, transport, and distribution.

Scientists widely believe exposure to ultraviolet light from the sun has been the dominant driver of skin colour throughout history. Across geographies, colours have also displayed a close connection to latitude, which in turn is correlated with ultraviolet exposure. There is also consensus that lighter skin colour across higher latitudes is the result of humans adapting to produce vitamin D – again, a process induced by ultraviolet light. Skin pigmentation also protects nutrients like folate from being broken down by ultraviolet radiation.

This said, systematic approaches to understanding and documenting skin colour have only been of recent interest. In 1735, the Swedish biologist Carl Linnaeus classified humans into four "varieties" based on skin colour. The Austrian anthropologist and explorer Felix von Luschan designed a scale with which to compare skin colour in the 19th century. The scale has 36 colours and is used to this day.

Dark-skinned humans evolved from apes around 1.2 million years ago by shedding body hair and adapting to ultraviolet radiation. Skin colour is also one of the more striking phenotypes (attributes produced by genes' interactions with the environment) in humans, being closely related to their migration and adaptation as they moved out of Africa around 100,000 years ago. Researchers have found genes associated with the melanocortin 1 receptor, a protein associated with the creation of light skin, in the DNA of Neanderthals from Spain and Italy but not from Croatia, and not in Denisovans.

A few genes

As for modern-day human skin colour: the prevailing hypothesis is that it's the result of natural selection across a few genes. Two of these, SLC24A5 and SLC45A2, are the most well-studied. They affect skin colour in modern Eurasians. Other genes like MC1R, TYRP1, and OCA2 affect that of East Asians. And all of them show signals of natural selection.

Researchers widely believe Europeans and East Asians adapted to have lighter skin through independent processes. Some evidence has been found for natural selection in Europeans around 11,000-19,000 years ago. A 2015 study led by Harvard Medical School, together with several international organisations, suggested Europeans became mostly light-skinned at least 4,000-6,000 years ago. Later, the admixture of global populations plus local adaptations resulted in the large diversity of skin colour we observe today.

> The diversity of skin colour across human populations is a product of human genetics, migration, and the complex interplay between genes and the environment

There are many exceptions to this general rule, however. For example, the Inuit people who have inhabited Alaska for more than five centuries, have darker yellowish brown skin compared to other populations at the same latitude. This has been a puzzling exception for many years. Researchers have hypothesised a high vitamin D intake and high ultraviolet exposure due to longer days have combined to create this anomaly.

Inspiration to harmony

Human genetic conditions like albinism – which results in partial or complete loss of pigment in the skin – provide insights into the biology of skin pigmentation and how society addresses people with rare conditions. Around one in 20,000 individuals around the world is estimated to have this condition, but the prevalence could be 20 times higher among the Tonga people of Africa and 120 times higher among the Guna people of South America. Individuals with albinism are highly predisposed to developing skin cancer, not to mention having to suffer regressive social attitudes.

The latest advances in genomics are improving our understanding of the biology of skin pigmentation. In a paper published in the journal *Nature Genetics* in January 2024, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania used genome editing and chromosomal conformational capture to identify the regulators of a number of genes involved in skin pigmentation. They identified the mechanisms by which mutations in the regulatory regions of four genes could affect pigmentation and its variability. They also identified a new gene, CYB561A3, that regulates skin pigmentation. This work expanded the repertoire of genes we know to be involved in the processes driving pigmentation diversity.

By exploring the scientific and genetic underpinnings of skin colour diversity, we gain insights into the biological processes and our shared evolutionary history as well as confront the complexities of social norms, privilege, and prejudice. Embracing diversity prepares us to embrace the rich heritage of humankind and inspires us to strive for more harmonious living.

(The authors are senior consultants at the Vishwanath Cancer Care Foundation and adjunct professors at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur. All opinions expressed are personal.)

BIG SHOT

Volcanic vortex rings emerge from a new pit crater on the north side of the southeast crater of the Etna Volcano in Sicily, Italy, on Friday. While the physical conditions under which volcanic vortex rings form are still not entirely known, scientists believe they are the result of a combination of fast gas release at the top of the magma conduit and regularity in the shape of the emitting vent. AP

WHAT IS IT?

Gape limitation: are you a big eater?

Arkatapa Basu

In ecology, 'gape limitation' stands for the idea that a predator can only eat things that fit in its mouth. Imagine a snake trying to eat a rabbit. If the rabbit is too big to fit in the snake's mouth, gape limitation says the latter won't be able to eat it. Researchers pay attention to the concept because it specifies which animals can eat which other animals. For example, small predators can only eat small prey, while bigger predators can eat bigger prey. From the prey's point of view, if a predator's mouth isn't big enough to devour it, perhaps those animals are safe from that predator. This barrier can in turn lead to evolutionary pressure that selects the predator's ability to eat smaller prey or, conversely, adaptations in the predator's behaviour to overcome gape limitation.

Gape limitations also influence how animals evolve over time. Prey animals might get faster or grow bigger to avoid being eaten by predators with smaller mouths. On the other hand, predators may evolve larger mouths to eat larger prey.

Understanding gape limitations is essential to predicting how changes in predator or prey populations, changes in habitats, and/or environmental disturbances could affect the structure and function of ecosystems. The study of gape limitations also helps researchers understand the intricate dynamics of animal interactions and the cascading effects they have on biodiversity.

Small predators can only eat small prey, while bigger predators can eat bigger prey. GETTY IMAGES

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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Amount Trump's campaign said it raked in a fundraising event

50 in $ million. Joe Biden raised the stakes at the end of March when he headlined a huge event in New York raking in at least $25 million. But Trump's campaign has said that he doubled that figure. AFP

The number of applications Suvidha portal received

73,000 The EC said its portal has received over 73,000 applications since the polls were announced, seeking permission for campaigning activities. PTI

The coal production target the NTPC has set for FY25

40 in MMT. NTPC said it has set a 40 million metric tonnes (MMT) coal production target from its captive mines for 2024-25. The target will help it achieve a 17% year-on-year growth in coal production. PTI

Amount Adani will invest in renewable energy, manufacturing

2.3 in ₹ lakh crore. Adani Green Energy Ltd will invest about ₹1.5 lakh crore in expanding capacity to generate electricity from solar energy and wind power at Khavda in Gujarat's Kutch. PTI

Number of months since the Gaza war broke out

6 At least 33,175 people have been killed in the besieged Palestinian territory. While Hamas has refused to say how many fighters it has lost, Israel claims to have killed more than 12,000. AFP

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Why are Vistara flights being cancelled?

What are the concerns about hectic rosters? What is the new pay structure which has caused widespread anger among junior pilots? How are pilots protesting against it? How has poor planning in training adversely exacerbated pilot shortage at the airline?

EXPLAINER

Jagriti Chandra

The story so far:
Vistara recently saw a large number of flight cancellations and delays which is being attributed to a mismatch between continuous route expansion and the strength of pilots at the airline. But coinciding with the announcement of a new pay structure ahead of the merger with Air India and deep discontentment among pilots over it, the disruption has unravelled a challenging consolidation of the four Tata Group airlines.

How bad was the massive flight disruption at Vistara?
Between March 31 and April 3, Vistara saw over 150 flights cancelled and 200 delayed for over two hours resulting in a massive disruption at the airline, primarily due to challenges with "crew unavailability" due to multiple factors. This was a sharp escalation from the "15-20" daily cancellations that started in mid-February, soon after the airline announced that a pay structure implemented for pilots at Air India would also be extended to Vistara. This had led to widespread anger among junior pilots (First Officers) as the new salary formula cuts the minimum guaranteed flying allowance of 70 hours to 40 hours and would result in a pay cut of ₹80,000 to ₹1.4 lakh for them out of a salary of ₹3.4 lakh. There are also concerns among senior pilots over their seniority in the merged entity over a combined seniority list being prepared that isn't fully being implemented.

As things spiralled out of control, the airline announced in a press statement that it had decided to "temporarily reduce the number of flights" as well as deploy the bigger Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner and A321neo to accommodate more number of passengers. The DGCA too sought a daily report on flight cancellations and delays and instructed the airline to ensure affected passengers receive refunds and compensation as per regulations. The airline's CEO, Vinod Kannan, has said that voluntary cancellations will continue till the end of April and industry sources say the airline has cancelled nearly 1,000 flights between March 31 to April 30 to streamline flight operations.

Turbulent times: A Vistara Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner during its launch in New Delhi. PTI

What are the reasons for crew unavailability?
The reasons are multi-fold. An important reason for cancellations according to pilot sources as well as Vistara's CEO was the roster crunch as there was a mismatch between network expansion at the airline and the strength of its pilots, resulting in a high number of working hours for pilots and stressful combination of flights. Some pilots said that it was a norm for them to receive "10-12" calls on their offs to be called for duty. Their rosters would also be changed on a regular basis with just a 12-hours notice and pilots complained there was no stability in their lifestyle. Most flights would require pilots to spend nights outside their home base and return only for their weekly off. Pilots who had long felt a sense of loyalty towards the airline got fed up with the mismanagement of rosters, that had been going on for nearly a year, and stopped co-operating.

It was around the same time that the airline announced a new pay structure for pilots in mid-February ahead of its merger with Air India which would adversely affect First Officers.

Soon, First Officers began to discuss plans to report sick in protest and their refusal to co-operate intensified with calls from the roster team for unplanned flights being rejected. As a result, the airline began to see 10-15 cancellations daily, which further escalated from March 31. The CEO has denied that the pilots went on a protest leave, and said pilots usually claim unutilised sick leaves at the end of the year which could have been managed better. However, in the same meeting he also told pilots that 270 out of 1,100 pilots, or a total 24.5%, had not accepted the new contract but later claimed in a press statement that 98% of pilots had accepted the new salary terms.

There are also concerns over poor planning in training resulting in delays of up to two years for First Officers to be upgraded to the post of Commanders, leading to them quitting to join other airlines. There were also delays in training pilots for Boeing 787 Dreamliners as a result of which Air India had to send 16 Commanders on deputation to Vistara.

What are the implications of these events on the merger?
The four Tata Group airlines are being merged into two to form a low-cost carrier (LCC) to compete with IndiGo and a full-service carrier. The former includes the merger of AIX Connect (formerly AirAsia India) and Air India Express, and the latter includes the merger of Vistara with Air India. The consolidation of the two LCCs is complete, while a National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) nod for the latter is awaited and the integration is likely to conclude by mid 2025.

Though the recent events in Vistara are unlikely to impact the merger in any substantial manner, they bring to the fore challenges in different work cultures. At Vistara, pilots have blamed expats helming affairs without enough understanding of local needs. At Air India, too, old timers blame an expanding "white man's club", both at leadership positions as well as at second and third rung, who they say are not familiar with the Indian regulatory environment and bureaucracy resulting in multiple penalties from the DGCA, including a temporary suspension of its simulator training facilities.

While some change for the good has happened such as better upgrades from narrowbody to widebody aircraft for pilots, aspects such as training are known to be gradually deteriorating resulting once again in a mismatch of crew requirement for an expanding fleet.

THE GIST

- Between March 31 and April 3, Vistara saw over 150 flights cancelled and 200 delayed for over two hours resulting in a massive disruption at the airline, primarily due to challenges with "crew unavailability".
- An important reason for cancellations according to pilot sources as well as Vistara's CEO Vinod Kannan was the roster crunch as there was a mismatch between network expansion at the airline and the strength of its pilots, resulting in a high number of working hours for pilots and stressful combination of flights.
- The four Tata Group airlines are being merged into two to form a low-cost carrier (LCC) to compete with IndiGo and a full-service carrier.

What would be the impact of the Baltimore bridge collapse?

How will the workers in the port be affected by the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge? What are the other factors affecting supply chains across the world?

Simona Stan

The collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge on March 26 has put a spotlight on the Port of Baltimore, one of the busiest harbours in the U.S., which paused shipping and immediately halted all vessel traffic in and out.

The port remained open to trucks following the incident, but the loss of maritime traffic is expected to cost $9 million a day. The overall economic toll is likely to be higher as billions of dollars of goods are rerouted amid the prospect of supply chains being snarled for months. It will also mean a loss of tax revenue for the city and state.

Here, a supply chain and logistics expert from the University of Montana explains the short- and long-term impacts of the crash on supply chains.

How important is the Port of Baltimore?
The Port of Baltimore is the ninth largest U.S. port by overall trade volume. In 2023 alone, it moved around 50 million tonnes of goods between the U.S. and other countries, much of it in large shipping containers, like those stacked on the ship that rammed into the bridge. Although it's smaller than other ports on the East Coast and in the Gulf of Mexico, it still plays a critical role in processing U.S. international trade traffic. That's especially true for some products, such as automobiles, heavy machinery and coal. It also handles a large share of U.S. sugar imports.

What's the short-term impact of its closure on supply chains?
The immediate impact will be felt by the 15,000 or so workers in the port and about 1,40,000 others who depend on it. It doesn't mean they'll be laid off, but drastically less traffic would mean less work to go around. Companies and consumers should expect some delays for packages that would have otherwise been processed by the port. How long depends on how much time it takes for ships to be rerouted to other terminals, but it should only add a matter of days or up to a week or two. Baltimore accounts for only 4% of overall East Coast trade, so it shouldn't have a major impact. Dealers will probably experience some delays receiving imported cars and light trucks, but things should be resolved within days or weeks.

What's the long-term impact?
The problem is that supply chains have been under stress from multiple directions lately.

Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea and Panama Canal bottlenecks have lengthened delivery times and increased costs for companies that rely on East Coast ports. The pause in maritime traffic at the Port of Baltimore adds one more point of pressure for trade in the region. This may lead more shippers that have a choice to send more freight through West Coast ports, which have not suffered much from the Red Sea attacks and Panama problems. This could also mean more business for trucking and rail companies if it means they have to transport more goods from the West to East Coast.

How does this supply chain shock compare with other recent ones?
From a supply chain perspective, this was a freak accident. It's dramatic, it's graphic, and it forces people to pay attention to the issue. But unlike the Red Sea attacks or the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic, which have led to lingering supply chain problems, fallout from the bridge collapse will be temporary. That said, we'll likely see public pressure on companies to try to prevent such a thing from happening again – even though the risk of ships striking bridges is very low.

The author is Professor of Marketing, University of Montana. This article has been republished from The Conversation.

THE GIST

- The Port of Baltimore is the ninth largest U.S. port by overall trade volume. In 2023 alone, it moved around 50 million tonnes of goods between the U.S. and other countries.
- The immediate impact of the collapse will be felt by the 15,000 or so workers in the port and about 1,40,000 others who depend on it.
- Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea and Panama Canal bottlenecks have lengthened delivery times and increased costs for companies that rely on East Coast ports.

INBRIEF

Complaint filed against BJP MLA for unsavoury remark

Following a complaint by the Gandhinagar Block Congress Committee to the Seshadripuram police seeking action against senior BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal for an unsavoury remark against Congress leader Dinesh Gundu Rao, his wife Tabu Rao has filed a complaint with the Sanjaynagar police seeking legal action.

Referring to Mr. Rao's inter-religious marriage to Ms. Tabu Rao, Mr. Yatnal allegedly said the Congress leader's house is "half Pakistan".

Mr. Yatnal's attack came after Mr. Rao tweeted about a BJP leader being detained for questioning by a team of the NIA in connection with The Rameshwaram Cafe blast case.

Terming Mr. Yatnal's politics divisive, Ms. Tabu Rao said the BJP has no issues on the development front to fight the elections.

"Let the BJP MLA attack his political rivals. Why drag our family into it?" she asked.

She also said that she will initiate criminal defamation proceedings against Mr. Yatnal for his communal comment.

From Page One

'Nirmala's remark has vindicated our charge'

The Chief Minister said: "When people of the State were suffering from floods and droughts, Mr. Modi and Mr. Shah did not visit Karnataka. Till date, not a single rupee has been released for drought relief from the State's share. Seven crore people of Karnataka should safeguard their self-respect by defeating the BJP that betrayed people of the State."

Krishna Byre Gowda in Delhi

Meanwhile, Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda is on a visit to Delhi to hold discussions with advocates representing Karnataka in the case against the Centre over the delay in drought relief, in the Supreme Court.

Seeking intervention in the release of drought relief under the National Disaster Response Fund, the State government in March filed a petition in the apex court over the delay in release of drought relief by the Centre.

As many as 223 out of the 236 taluks have been declared drought-hit as the State recorded below normal rainfall this monsoon, affecting crops in about 48 lakh hectares.

While the State has estimated the loss due to drought to be about ₹35,000 crore, in October last year it had sought compensation of ₹18,171 crore.

Sources in the Revenue Department said that the Minister would be part of the discussions to chart out strategy for Karnataka's argument in the court.

GE outbreak: 13 patients discharged

Earlier, hospital authorities said of the 47 medical students of BMCRI girls' hostel who had been admitted to Victoria hospital with GE, two have tested positive for cholera. Following the outbreak, Nagalakshmi Chowdhary, chairperson of the Karnataka State Commission for Women, who inspected the girls' hostel and visited the ailing students, took up a suo motu case against the medical college authorities on Saturday.

E-paper edition

The Hindu offers more coverage of Bengaluru in the e-paper edition. (epaper.thehindu.com)

In the issue dated April 8, we have a story on Dr. Sankara Rao, Visiting Professor and Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, who spoke about India Flora Online, a digital database of the flora of India.

Text & Context and Science

Weekday features on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carries explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (April 8, Monday), the following articles are available:

- How is democracy measured by global indices? **bit.ly/measuringdemocracy**
- How genetics is revealing skin colour biology is more than skin-deep **bit.ly/skincolourbio**

You can use your smartphone's inbuilt features to access these articles. If it's an Android phone, use Google Lens to read and tap the url to access an article. If it's an iPhone, use Live Text on camera to do the same.

Universities, RWAs plan unique programmes to promote voting

Conferences, street plays, WhatsApp groups, and town hall meetings have been planned in this regard; Bengaluru's voter turnout in the 2023 State Assembly elections was 54.53%

Jahnavi T.R.
BENGALURU

Going beyond the usual registration drives, educational institutions and resident welfare associations (RWA) in Bengaluru have planned multiple events and programmes to fight urban apathy when it comes to voting ahead of the Lok Sabha elections on April 26.

This year, universities are holding conferences, street plays, and other activities like debate competitions to encourage students, many of whom are first timers, to cast their votes.

"Our voters' registration drive on the campus was a huge success as we had many enrollments. We are also holding panel discussions and talks for students on the importance of voting, and how the democratic process in the country works considering the fact that we are one of the largest democratic countries in the world," said Kiran Jeevan, Public Relations Officer, St. Joseph's University.

He added, "We are also encouraging students to talk about the issues and concerns of the country like employment and how the student community can be a part of policy making and be participants in governance for the future of the country."

Bengaluru City University (BCU) has partnered with the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) to promote voting among students. "Our students from the NSS units are involved in the SVEEP programme of the BBMP. We also recently had a general conference and workshop, as well as a street play for awareness creation. The university, the BBMP and affiliated colleges have planned many events together. The colleges are doing it on a micro level for their students," said Lingaraja Gandhi, Vice-Chancellor, BCU.

The big day: Bengaluru will vote in the Lok Sabha elections on April 26. FILE PHOTO

Bengaluru's voter turnout in previous elections

2023 Assembly elections		
54.53%		
2019 Lok Sabha elections		
Bengaluru South	Bengaluru North	Bengaluru Central
54.2%	50.84%	50.84%

Bengaluru's voter turnout in the 2023 State Assembly elections was 54.53%, whereas in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Bengaluru South recorded 54.2%, Bengaluru North 50.84%, and Bengaluru Central (50.84%).

With elections falling on Friday this time and many planning to travel to make use of the long weekend, the RWAs have devised new ways to ensure that voting does not take a hit.

"We want everyone to compulsorily vote and maybe then travel wherever they want. We have asked owners in our association to ask their tenants to compulsorily vote. We are also creating a WhatsApp group where all residents are supposed to update us once they are done with voting," said H.E. Chandrashekar, secretary, Federation of HSR Layout RWA.

Lok Sabha elections 2024

The Bangalore Apartments' Federation (BAF) has a three-pronged approach for elections under the the 'Every vote matters' campaign - voter registration camps, creation of awareness about candidates, parties and manifestos, pushing for participation on voting day.

"In this direction, we recently had a town hall meeting with a few candidates from all four constituencies which will be circulated to among all our members. We are also facilitating cluster-level meeting for candidates to meet voters," said Vikram Rai, general secretary, BAF.

He added that on election day, many also maintain a voting percentage log at the community level so that it promotes a healthy competition to vote.

Clamping method used to prevent profuse bleeding during delivery

Afshan Yasmeen
BENGALURU

A 25-year-old woman with a high-risk pregnancy got a new lease of life thanks to a temporary aortic cross clamping method used by doctors at the State-run Vani Vilas hospital to stop profuse bleeding.

Diagnosed with placenta previa, a serious obstetric complication and a significant cause of maternal mortality, the woman was referred to Vani Vilas. Apart from severe bleeding, she was sweating profusely. Her pulse rate was high, suggestive of tachycardia (a condition that makes the heart beat more than 100 times per minute), and her blood pressure was low.

Doctors rushed her to the high-risk pregnancy operation theatre. They were able to conduct a cesarean delivery by doing a temporary aortic cross clamping to stop the bleeding. This cross clamping, which is usually done in cardiac surgeries, is being used for the first time in a government facility in Karnataka, doctors claimed.

M. Sathesha, Associate Professor of Anaesthesia at Vani Vilas, said placenta previa is a serious complication wherein the placenta attaches low in the uterus. "This aorta clamp was developed by V.P. Paily, a senior obstetric consultant and a master trainer for the Kerala Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. It has been found to be quite useful in containing blood loss," the doctor explained.

"Called the Paily Aorta Clamp, this method is currently being used by multiple centres in Kerala. We started using it a month ago and have so far been able to prevent complications in four women, including one emergency case," the doctor said.

Doctors at Vani Vilas hospital used this method. FILE PHOTO

Savitha C., Vani Vilas Medical Superintendent, said placenta previa is emerging as a major concern and is a significant cause of maternal mortality and morbidity. "The placenta is an organ that develops inside the uterus during pregnancy. It provides oxygen and nutrition to the baby, and removes waste. The placenta connects to the baby through the umbilical cord. Typically, the placenta is attached to the top or side of the inner wall of the uterus. With placenta previa, the placenta attaches lower in the uterus," she explained.

"A previous C-section scar is the most typical risk factor for this condition, as the placenta deeply adheres to the scar tissue and into the uterine wall, sometimes extending to nearby organs, such as the bladder," she said.

"In such cases, the placenta will not eject itself naturally after delivery. Any attempt to remove it results in torrential hemorrhage, especially if encountered unexpectedly during delivery. Even when saved, the woman suffers catastrophic morbidity," she explained.

Three die as private bus meets with accident near Holalkere

The Hindu Bureau
SHIVAMOGGA

Three persons died and 33 were injured when a private bus met with an accident near Holalkere town in Chitradurga district around 4.30 a.m. on Sunday.

The driver of the bus, which was heading to Gokarna from Bengaluru, lost control of the vehicle while negotiating a curve. The bus fell off the road, according to the police.

Two identified

The police have identified two of the deceased as Jagadish, 45, of Honnavar, Uttara Kannada, and Ganapathi, 40, of Sagar in Shivamogga district.

The police are yet to ascertain the identity of the other person.

The injured are being treated in hospitals in Chitradurga and Holalkere, said the police.

Negligent driving

The police added that negligent driving is said to be the reason for the accident.

The Holalkere police rushed to the spot and shifted the injured to hospitals. A case has been registered.

Timings
BENGALURU

MONDAY, APR. 08	
RISE 06:11	SET 18:32
RISE 05:42	SET 18:14
TUESDAY, APR. 09	
RISE 06:11	SET 18:32
RISE 06:26	SET 19:14
WEDNESDAY, APR. 10	
RISE 06:10	SET 18:32
RISE 07:13	SET 20:14

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	37	27
Mysuru	38	25
Bengaluru	37	24

Bengaluru Today
37°C A dry weather to continue. Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be very warm with uneasy afternoon.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
36°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be pleasant with mist & haze. Day will be very warm with uneasy afternoon. Night will be pleasant.

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THE HINDU
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IN THE COURT OF THE 73rd ADDITIONAL CITY CIVIL JUDGE AT MAYO HALL, BANGALORE (CCH-74)
P & SC No. 25023 of 2024

BETWEEN : 1) KALYANI KRISHNAN Widow of late Sri V. Krishnan Aged about 92 years, Residing at No. 15, Payappa Gardens, Tasker Town, Bangalore 560051.
2) PADMA SEETHARAMAN, Daughter of late Sri V. Krishnan Widow of Late Sri T.S. Seetharaman Aged about 66 years, Residing at FB 102 B, 1st Floor, Golden Grand Apartment, Tumkur Road, Yeshwanthpur Area, Bangalore-560022.
3) VIJAYALAKSHMI SURESH, Daughter of late Sri V. Krishnan Wife of Sri K. Suresh Aged about 67 years, Residing at No. 3, Parameshwarinagar, 2nd Street, Adyar, Chennai-600 020.
4) SAVITHRI ANANTHANARAYANAN Daughter of late Sri V. Krishnan Wife of Sri. V. Ananthanarayanan Aged about 65 years, Residing at No. 125, Tenth Cross Indiranagar First Stage, Bangalore 560038.
...PETITIONERS
AND : NIL ...RESPONDENTS

PUBLIC NOTICE

WHEREAS the Petitioners above named have made an application under Section 222, 276 & Chapter IV of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 read with Rule 5 of the Rules Governing Probate and Administration Matters, 1964 for grant of Probate of the last Will and Testament dated 24.01.2003 executed by late Sri V. Krishnan, son of late Sri V.P. Vishwanatha Iyer, who died in Bangalore City on 18.02.2003. Be it known that no Caveat has been lodged and the aforesaid petition is posted for hearing on **22.04.2024 at 11:00 A.M.** Any person/s having objection to the grant of Probate may appear on the given date and raise their objections failing which the matter will proceed in accordance with law.

SCHEDULE

All that piece and parcel of immovable property bearing No. 125, Block No. Binnamangala Layout Extension measuring East to West 61'-6"ft., North to South 40-0" ft. together with al l structures, rights, appurtenances whatsoever whether underneath or above the surface and bounded as follows:- **East by :** Road; **West by:** Property No. 74; **North by:** Property No. 124; **South by :** Property No. 126.

By the Order of the Court, Deputy Registrar City Civil Court, Mayo Hall Unit, Bengaluru
Advocate for Petitioners
CrestLaw Partners, Advocates
No. 33, I Cross, Victoria Road,
Xavier Layout, Bengaluru-560047.

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, PAPIA MOITRA, D/o. Late Ashok Moitra, R/at # 506B, Apoorva Paradise, RM Nagar, Bang 16 have changed my name from PAPIA BAGCHI to PAPIA MOITRA for all my future purposes by affidavit 05–04–2024 sworn before notary Y R Chandra Sekar.

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LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE XVII ADDL CITY CIVIL JUDGE AT BANGALORE (CCH-16)
ORIGINAL SUIT NO. 5144 OF 2022

BETWEEN :
ICICI Bank Ltd.
A body corporate, incorporated and registered under the Indian Companies Act, 1956 and licensed as a Bank under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 having Registered Office at : "Landmark", Race Course Circle, Vadodara- 390 007. and having its Regional office at ICICI Bank Ltd., No. 4/10, 1st Floor, Mythree Tower, Bommanahalli, Hosur Road, Bangalore- 560 068, and represented by its POA Holder and Manager Mr. Rohith Ali M. S/o Ishrath Ali M., Age : 24 years.
...PLAINTIFF

AND :
Mr. SIMON P.T.
....DEFENDANT

Summons to the defendant by way of paper publication

To,
Defendant :
Mr. SIMON P.T.
Aged about 58 years, Son of Thomas S.P., Proprietor of Zeal Suzuki. R/of. No. G4, Jayalakshmi Complex, Main Road, Gonikoppal, Kodagu Dist- 571 213.

Whereas the Plaintiff above named has filed a suit under Order VII Rule 1 & 2 of the Civil Procedure Code for recovery of Rs. 6,67,436/- (Rupees Six Lakhs Sixty Seven Thousand Four Hundred and Thirty Six Only) together with interest at the rate 18% p.a. from date of due to till the date of realization. You are hereby summoned to appear before this Hon'ble Court, in person or by a pleader on 10/06/2024 at 11.00 am to show cause against the suit, and failing wherein the suit will be heard and determined exparte.

Given under my hand and seal of the Court this **27th** day of **March, 2024.**

By the order of court
Asst. Registrar,
City Civil Court,
Bangalore

Advocates for Plaintiff
S.M. ANEES AHAMED,
B.M. KHUSALAPPA
Advocates,
No.4 (10/2), West Park Road,
Kumara Park East,
Bangalore- 560 001

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ISSN 0971 - 751X

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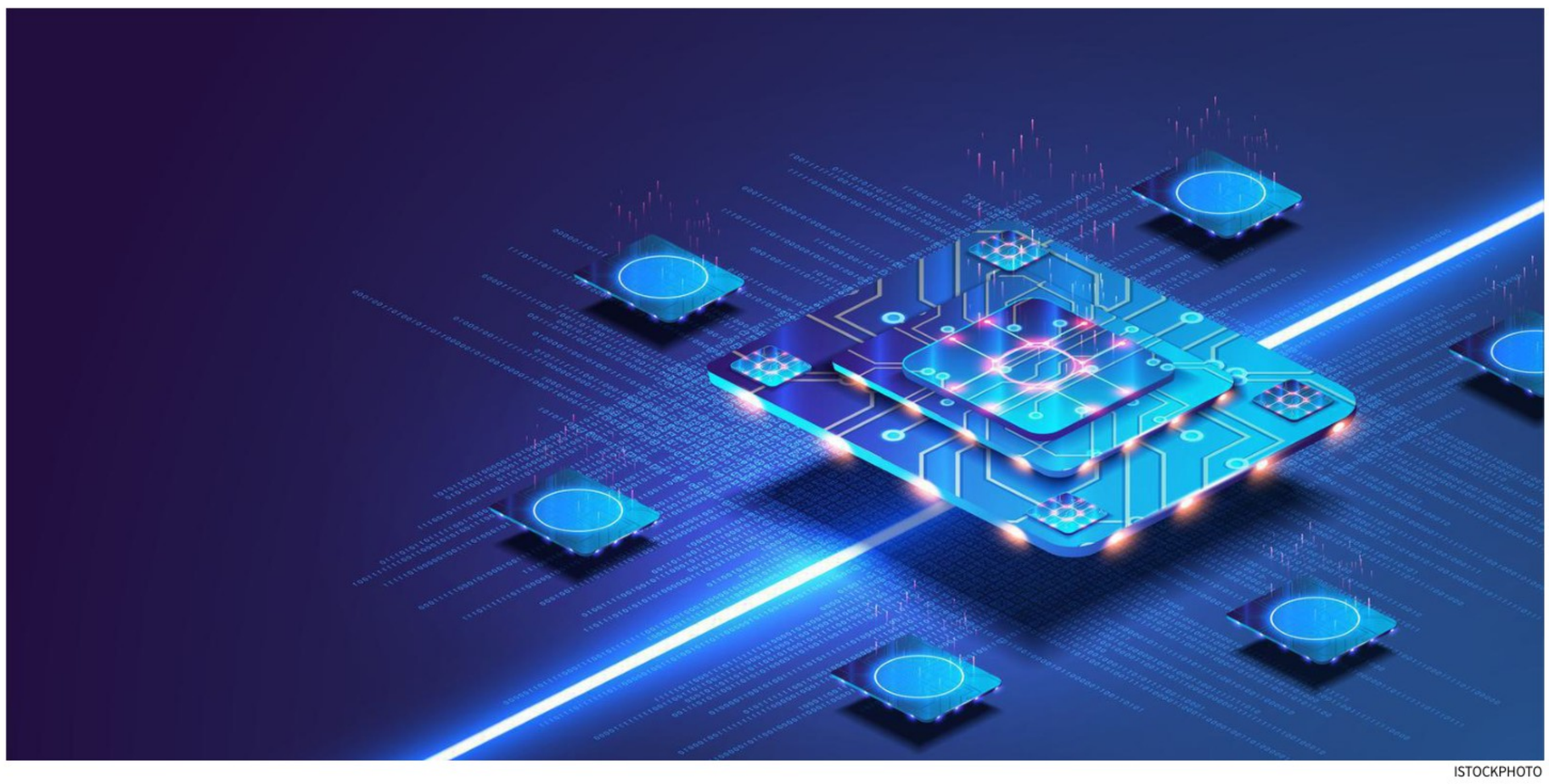

ISTOCKPHOTO

What is the technology behind manufacturing a semiconductor chip?

What has been the role of the transistor in the semiconductor revolution? What happens at an assembly and test plant? How has the semiconductor become smaller and smaller? What does India's current semiconductor ecosystem look like?

Sandeep Rao

The story so far:

Semiconductor chip manufacturing capabilities are currently limited to very few regions in the world. With supply chain disruptions during the pandemic and recent geopolitical tensions, many companies and countries, including India, have realised the importance of investing in chip manufacturing infrastructure. The TATA group has partnered with Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (PSMC) to set-up a 300mm wafer fabrication plant in Gujarat. It will roll out its first 28nm chip in 2026. Two assembly and test plants in Gujarat and Assam have also been recently approved by the Government of India.

What is a semiconductor chip? How is it manufactured?

A semiconductor has properties between a conductor (which conducts electricity) and an insulator (which does not). In its purest form a semiconductor is a very weak conductor of electricity. However, its electrical properties can be changed by adding small amounts of certain substances called 'dopants'. By taking a pure semiconductor and carefully injecting certain parts with specific dopants, complex circuits can be 'printed' on the semiconductor.

The process is crudely analogous to creating an intricate work of art on a paper or a wall, by using a bunch of stencils and spray paints of different colours. The stencils are called 'masks' in the industry and the paint is analogous to the dopant.

What is a transistor?

The transistor, one of the earliest electronic components to be built using a semiconductor, is an extremely versatile device. In its most popular form it can function as an electronic switch. A typical semiconductor chip can have millions/billions of these interconnected switches that work together to perform various logical and computational operations.

A transistor can also function as an amplifier (to amplify the weak signal received by your cell phone) and is an integral part of circuits that generate and process high frequency signals (such as those required in wireless communication technologies). Today all these different avatars of the transistor are routinely packed into a single semiconductor chip (such as the WiFi chip in your mobile).

The transistor demonstrated how a single device could be built out of a piece of a semiconductor. 'Printing' multiple devices onto a single piece of a semiconductor to create entire circuits was the next leap. Both these breakthroughs laid the foundation for the semiconductor revolution and have been aptly recognised by Nobel Prizes (in 1956 and 2000).

What is fabrication technology?

Technology has progressed at a relentless pace since the semiconductor chip was first conceptualised more than six decades ago. Newer manufacturing technologies have been introduced at a regular cadence. The level of miniaturisation of the semiconductor has increased by orders of magnitude. Sticking with the stencil analogy this is mainly due to the stencils being able to etch smaller and more intricate patterns. There have been equally impressive gains in the switching capability of the transistors. They are able to switch on-and-off faster (more computations per second) and with lesser power consumption (longer battery life and lesser heat dissipation).

The industry has used labels like '45nm', '28nm' and '16nm' to introduce each new manufacturing technology. 'nm' is short for nano-meter and refers to an extremely small unit of length equal to one billionth of a meter. These numbers convey the level of miniaturisation that is achievable using a particular technology (so smaller is better). Though not always accurate, you can think of this number as representing the dimensions of single transistor. While traditionally electronic circuits have been laid out flat on the semiconductor, researchers are increasing looking to capitalise on the third dimension (height). As the length and breadth of a transistor switch decreases, increasing its height can help ensure reliable performance. Stacking entire circuits on top of one another is another way to continue to shrink semiconductor chip sizes.

What is known as a wafer?

A semiconductor chip is manufactured much like a postage stamp. A sheet of stamps is printed on a piece of paper and then each individual stamp is cut out. Similarly, an array (typically 300-400) of chips are printed on a circular piece of semiconductor (called a wafer in industry parlance). This is then diced to create individual chips. A larger wafer size allows more chips to be printed on a single wafer which makes chip production faster and cheaper. Wafer sizes used in the industry have constantly been increasing. The current state of art is 300mm which is approximately 12 inches (this refers to the diameter of the wafer). Efforts are ongoing to move to a 450mm wafer size. While moving to a larger wafer size has its technical challenges and capital expenses, it has proven to be economical in the long run.

Once the wafer has been diced into chips, each individual chip has to be packaged in a protective covering. Tiny wires have to be routed from the device to the boundary of the package. Some of these wires supply power, while other are used for feeding in and reading out signals and data. A chip also has to be tested – this includes verifying its functionality and stress testing (subjecting the chip to high temperature and voltages) – to ensure reliability during its lifetime. All this is performed in an assembly and test plant.

What does India's semiconductor ecosystem look like?

India has had a thriving chip design industry since the 1990s. Due to the magic of computer aided design it is possible to design a semiconductor chip entirely in software. The process of specifying the functionality of a chip, translating this functionality to electronic circuits, validating the circuits, optimising for speed, power consumption and size, can be done by a team of skilled engineers sitting at their desktops. The final design is abstracted into a file and sent to a fabrication plant for manufacturing. It's a bit like designing an entire graphic novel on your laptop and then sending the pdf to your publisher for printing.

India's foray into semiconductor manufacturing will benefit from the existing ecosystem for chip design which was fuelled by a steady supply of electronics and computer engineers. Semiconductor manufacturing being an essentially inter-disciplinary endeavour, could present opportunities to a wider array of professionals such as process and control engineers, data scientists, material scientists, physicists and chemical engineers to contribute meaningfully to this industry.

The author is with Texas Instruments

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

On April 8, 1911, superconductivity was discovered by Dutch physicist Heike Kamerlingh Onnes. A quiz on superconductors

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

A superconductor is a material whose properties are such that the material can conduct electricity without resistance. Superconductors also demonstrate one other common trait: they expel _____ _____. Fill in the blanks.

QUESTION 2

Heike Kamerlingh Onnes was awarded the physics Nobel Prize two years after 1911 "for his investigations on the properties of matter at low temperatures". Name the process Onnes used to liquefy gases, a prerequisite for these discoveries.

QUESTION 3

In 1986, Georg Bednorz and Alex Muller found that lanthanum barium copper oxide became a superconductor at 35 K — a big jump from the 23 K record until then. In 1987, the American Physical Society invited the duo to present their findings at a meeting. This meeting has since been called the "X of physics" for the excitement it generated. What is X?

QUESTION 4

Scientists have found that when two sheets of graphene are stacked such that their bonds are parallel, and then one sheet is twisted by an angle of 1.1 degrees with respect to the other, the system acquires the properties of a superconductor. What is this angle called?

QUESTION 5

When a superconductor spins, it generates a magnetic field whose axis aligns perfectly with the spin axis. Name the NASA satellite launched in 2004 that used this effect to test two predictions of general relativity.

Visual question:

He's the only scientist to have received the Nobel Prize for physics twice. The second was in 1972 for his contributions to developing a microscopic theory of superconductivity. Name him.

Questions and Answers to the April 5 edition of the daily quiz: 1 The anniversary of the voyage of SS Loyalty is celebrated as _____ Day. It was first observed in this year. **Ans: National Maritime Day, 1964**

2. This British Prime Minister resigned on April 5 in 1955. **Ans: Winston Churchill**

3. The primary goal of this company set up under the sponsorship of the Indian government was to ensure availability of essential drugs to the masses. **Ans: Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited Company**

4. This poet is considered one of the central figures of the Beat Generation. **Ans: Allen Ginsberg**

5. The theme of this year's International Day of Conscience. **Ans: Promoting the Culture of Peace with Love and Conscience**

Visual: Identify the actress and the character she played in the show *Feud*. **Ans: Susan Sarandon; Bette Davis**

Early Birds: Prashant Nain| Jyot Prakash Gulati| Jagrati Shukla| Abhyuday Singh Bhadauria| Bhumika Dhoundiyal

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

She was on cloud nine yesterday

I have to give the children a bath before they go for their extracurricular activities

S. Upendran

What it the meaning and origin of the expression 'on cloud nine'? (Jyothi Hariharan, Secunderabad)

When someone says that they are on cloud nine, they are implying they are on top of the world. They are extremely happy with the way things are, and as far as they are concerned, God is in his heaven and all is right with the world! The idiom has more or less the same meaning as another popular expression – 'in seventh heaven'. According to scholars, the expression 'in seventh heaven' gave rise to 'on cloud seven'; it was only years later that 'seven' became 'nine'.

When Sheba heard she had been promoted, she was on cloud nine.

Meteorologists, who take special interest in clouds, label thunderstorm clouds as 'cloud nine'. These clouds, also known as 'cumulonimbus' clouds, rise to over 40,000 feet. So, if you are 'on' one of them and looking down, there is every reason for you to be ecstatic – for you will be on top of the world! Radio buffs believe that the weekly series about a private investigator, 'Johnny Dollar', broadcast in the 1950s, popularised the use of the idiom.

Can the word 'bath' be used as a verb as well? (K. Chethan, Madurai)

Yes, it can. It is much more common, however, to hear the word being used as a noun. We very often hear people say, 'I take a bath around seven in the morning' and 'During summer, I have a bath twice a day'. The British and the Americans tend to spell the word differently when it is used as a verb. The Americans tend it spell it 'bathe' – the 'ba' rhymes with 'may', 'hay' and 'say', and the final 'the' sounds like the 'th' in 'though', 'this' and 'that'. The British, on the other hand, do not make a distinction between the noun and the verb forms of the word – both in terms of pronunciation and spelling. When you 'bathe' or 'bath' someone, you give them a bath.

During winter, Srilatha bathes/baths her children every other day.

How is the word 'riposte' pronounced? (K.V. Naresh, Ongole)

The Americans pronounce the second syllable like the word 'post', and the vowel in the first, like the 'i' in 'bit', 'sit' and 'kit'. The English, on the other hand, rhyme the second syllable with the words 'cost' and 'lost'. In both cases, the stress is on the second syllable. There are some people, who when they are criticised, come up with a quick, witty response. This clever comeback or response is referred to as a 'riposte'. This word of French origin, which can be used both as a noun and a verb, comes from the sport of fencing – the quick thrust that a swordsman makes is called a riposte.

Be careful with Veda. He's well known for his witty ripostes.

upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

Svelte:

being of delicate or slender build

Synonyms: slender, slight, slim

Usage: *She returned to college looking decidedly svelte.*

Pronunciation: bit.ly/sveltepro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈsvɛlt/, /ˈsfɛlt/

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Holiday bookings up this summer vacation, with a rise of 30-40% in domestic travel

However, a few tour operators have also seen a slight fall in bookings, especially when it comes to family packages, with Lok Sabha elections being held on April 26 in Bengaluru

Jahnavi T.R.
BENGALURU

With the academic year coming to an end, travel enthusiasts are packing their bags and heading to hill stations and beaches to escape the heat of Bengaluru.

While many private tour operators have seen an uptick in the number of bookings this year during the summer vacation, the upcoming elections might have kept some others from travelling.

"We have seen an around 30 to 40% increase in bookings this year when compared to the previous year. Within India, our packages to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Goa are doing very well. When it comes to international travel, Singapore and Malaysia seem to be the popular choices," said Neha S., from Horizon Travels in Sampangiramanagar.

Ms. Neha attributed the rise to an increase in group travel and the influence of social media. "When people see someone's travel photos on social media, they make their own travel plans. Then there is also the reason of wanting to spend more time with friends and family together, which is why they are opting for group tours," she said.

Mysuru, Kodagu, and Gokarna are the preferred destinations for travellers from both within and outside of Karnataka. Ooty - Kodaikanal, Wayanad, and Tirupati are also the destinations of choice for Bengalureans, according to travel operators.

Escape route: Travel enthusiasts are packing their bags and heading to hill stations and beaches to escape the heat of Bengaluru. FILE PHOTO

> Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Dubai continue to be popular choices among Bengalureans, with a noticeable uptick of 10-15% in outbound travel.
>
> **SABINA CHOPRA,**
> Co-founder & COO, Yatra Online

> We have seen around 30 – 40% increase in bookings this year when compared to the previous year. Within India, our packages to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Goa are doing very well.
>
> **NEHA S.**
> Horizon Travels in Sampangiramanagar

The Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) has received advance bookings for the next two months. Its property in Ooty has an occupancy rate of 95% for the next two months, followed by the hotel in Madikeri with 65% occupancy, and 60% in the hotels in Mysuru and near the KRS.

"We are still getting bookings every day. Soon, most of the units will have a 100% occupancy rate," said a senior official from KSTDC.

When it comes to tour packages, the KSTDC's Tirupati packages have the highest bookings. North Karnataka Tour, South India, South Canara temple tours and Goa-Gokarna- Jog Falls packages have also attracted bookings.

Election effect

With the Lok Sabha elections being scheduled on April 26 in Bengaluru, a few tour operators have seen a slight fall in bookings, especially when it comes to family packages.

"We have not received as many enquiries as we usually do for summer vacation due to elections. Teachers and other government employees who usually travel this time are deputed for election duty. Hence, they have dropped their travel plans this time," said a manager at Shree Tours and Travels in Mahalakshmi Layout.

Increased travel abroad

When compared to last year, private operators have noticed an increase in the people travelling abroad from Bengaluru. "Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Dubai continue to be popular choices among Bengalureans, with a noticeable uptick of 10-15% in outbound travel," said Sabina Chopra, co-founder & COO, Yatra Online.

THE HINDU
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What makes a teacher great?

Defining 10 characteristics of outstanding educators

A. Joseph Dorairaj

Great teachers are not born, but made. The process is long and arduous but the outcome is rewarding. What goes into the making of an exceptional teacher? What are the hallmarks of a great teacher?

Self-reflection: Great teachers constantly reflect on their profession and their academic pursuits. They frequently ask themselves: Did my students learn anything today? Is there anything I could have done better? Was my pedagogic strategy appropriate and fruitful? Did I complete the tasks that I had planned? Did I collect my students' feedback and analyse it? This introspection and self-reflection enables them to look back and forward and become better teachers. A teacher who does not introspect on his/her everyday academic pursuits lacks the propulsion to go forward.

Multidisciplinary: Such teachers are multidisciplinarians and impart a holistic education. While grounded in their own respective disciplines, they are acutely conscious that knowledge is whole and, therefore, undertake inter- and multidisciplinary projects. Apart from focusing on cognitive development, their goal is to transform their students into well-rounded individuals who will be connected to the transcendent, their fellow human beings and the ecosystem.

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Research oriented: They are research-oriented and try to address real academic problems. They convert academic issues into research problems and try to 'solve' them in a relatively short span of time. They collect data, both quantitative and qualitative, to 'test' their research hypotheses. The fact that practising teachers strive to find answers to classroom issues through action research projects is to be welcomed.

Experimental: Great teachers take risks in their academic ventures. They do not shy away from trying out different methodologies to teach a particular concept or theory or text. They experiment with new methods, even if these do not always bear fruit. While most teachers shun innovation for fear of failure, outstanding teachers are willing to 'take the road less travelled by', despite potential threats and failures.

Use technology: All great teachers are conversant with technology. Post-COVID, the use of technology for academic purposes, especially teaching-learning, has come down. But good teachers ensure that technology assists and complements their teaching. They encourage their students to sign up for MOOCs and use online resources for their academic enrichment. Such teachers constantly update themselves with the latest in technology.

Interactive: They are community-oriented in the sense that they share their stories – successes as well as failures – with their colleagues. They draw inspiration with regard to pedagogy and classroom management from their peers and, in turn, offer suggestions, especially with regard to successful strategies. This makes staff rooms vibrant spaces for informal interactive sessions.

Encourage students: Exceptional teachers believe in the efficacy of student-talk. In a typical classroom, teachers are obsessed with 'covering' the syllabus and refuse to devote time to students' interaction. But outstanding teachers know that students' interaction should be given time and space and encourage students to not only ask questions but also have a questioning mind. Great teachers catalyse interactions.

Socially committed: Such teachers have a strong social commitment. They do not get lost in esoteric research projects that do not have any connection to ground realities. They are conscious of their responsibility to protect the fragile ecosystem and reach out to the disadvantaged sections through education. They instill in their students a concern for the environment and the marginalised, and encourage them to get involved in transformative extension and outreach activities with the dream of creating an equitable world.

Constant learning: They are life-long learners. They constantly update themselves through Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs). They ensure that the curricula of their respective disciplines is updated periodically so that their students are conversant with the latest developments. They prepare their students to face the future confidently by initiating them into the culture of 'learning to learn'.

Improvisation: Great teachers, like all good professionals, think on their feet. When they enter a classroom, they are prepared to adjust their teaching strategies and classroom management. This improvisation enables them to face any situation, however unexpected and challenging. In fact, thinking on one's feet is a vital skill in today's fast-changing world.

Great teachers constantly reinvent themselves so that they are prepared to address fresh challenges. They revitalise themselves every day so that they remain vibrant and relevant.

They are life-long learners. They ensure that the curricula of their respective disciplines is updated periodically so that their students are conversant with the latest developments.

The writer is a Professor of English, Gandhigram Rural Institute Deemed-to-be University. Email josephdorairaj@gmail.com

SCHOLARSHIPS

Vardhman Foundation Shakun Oswal Scholarship
Eligibility: Students in any year of diploma or ITI courses who have secured at least 50% marks in Class 10 and/ or Class 12 board exam. Annual family income must be less than or equal to ₹6 lakhs.
Rewards: ₹20,000
Application: Online
Deadline: April 20
www.b4s.in/edge/SOSP1

Goonj Setu Fellowship
Eligibility: Open to those between 21 and 30 years as on July 31, 2024 and have graduated from a recognised institution by the same date. Basic understanding of English or Hindi and proficiency in Microsoft Office and other relevant computer tools are required.
Rewards: Between ₹20,000 and ₹22,000 per month depending on the city.
Application: Online
Deadline: April 22
www.b4s.in/edge/GGSF1

D. K. Bhave Scholarship
Eligibility: Open to graduates of the Engineering Faculty of Savitribai Phule Pune University, or final-year B.E. or B.Tech. students in any branch of an NBA-accredited institute who have secured merit-based admission for a Master's in Engineering and Technology at an accredited university in the U.S., Canada, Germany, or England. Applicants must maintain a minimum academic record/performance of Grade B or higher.
Rewards: 50% of the total cost a year
Application: Online
Deadline: May 11
www.b4s.in/edge/DKBS1

Courtesy: Buddy4study.com

Turnout trends

In 2019, at 68.8%, Karnataka saw its highest voter turnout for Lok Sabha election since the State's inception. A look at voter turnout in Karnataka Lok Sabha elections and the constituencies with the highest and lowest voter turnout, across years

Chart 1

Voter turnout in Karnataka Lok Sabha elections, across years

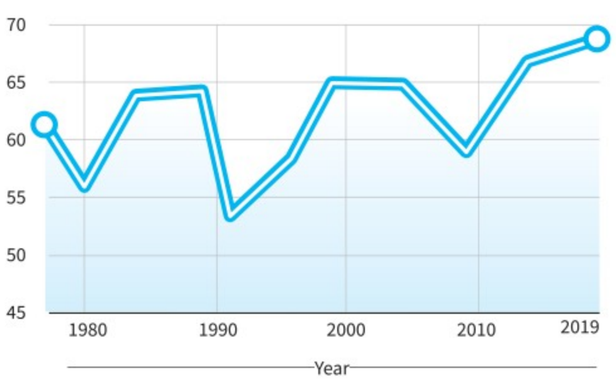


Table 2

Highest and lowest voter turnout, across constituencies

Top five constituencies in terms of voter turnout

	Constituency	Voter turnout (%)	Year
1	Mandya	80.6	2019
2	Dakshina Kannada	78.0	2019
3	Tumakuru	77.4	2019
4	Hassan	77.3	2019
5	Kolar	77.2	2019

■ All the five constituencies with the highest voter turnout were from the 2019 Lok Sabha election in Karnataka. Notably, of the 28 constituencies in the State, 16 had a voter turnout above the 70% mark in 2019

Bottom five constituencies in terms of voter turnout

	Constituency	Voter turnout (%)	Year
1	Raichur	37.9	1991
2	Bidar	38.6	1980
3	Raichur	39.1	1980
4	Kalaburagi	39.8	1991
5	Raichur	42.5	1996

■ Despite a gradual increase in voter turnout, the Raichur constituency has consistently recorded one of the lowest voter turnout in Karnataka, never surpassing the 60% mark

Convention on BJP's 'failures'

The Communist Party (CPI) on Sunday organised a political convention of all coalition partners of the INDI Alliance with a slogan of "Defeat BJP and save India". The issue of price rise, privatisation of national resources, rising income inequality, atrocities on women and Dalits and policy failures, among others, were discussed.

"Congress govt. is trying to build a false narrative that the Centre has meted out injustice to the State as its guarantee schemes have failed to yield results.

R. ASHOK
Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly

The BJP-JD(S) tie-up has left workers of both parties worried, particularly in Bengaluru Rural, Tumakuru, Hassan, Mysuru, Tumakuru, and Mandya. FILE PHOTO

Many grassroots JD(S) and BJP workers face identity crisis

Sharath S. Srivatsa
BENGALURU

While candidates have hit the campaign trail for the Lok Sabha elections, several local leaders and grassroots-level workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party and Janata Dal (Secular), parties that have struck an alliance ahead of polls, are confused and anxious about the prospect of losing their identity and political constituency.

For the JD(S) workers, especially in the Vokkaliga-dominated districts, the situation has reversed from what it was last time around. If they were anxious in 2019 since the party had entered into an understanding with Congress, with which the JD(S) had formed the government after a fractured mandate in 2018, it is now in alliance with the BJP. In 2018 polls, Congress and JD(S) had bitterly fought the Assembly election before coming together to form the government led by H.D. Kumaraswamy that lasted 14 months. Similarly, during the 2023 elections, the JD(S) and BJP fought an intense battle in many constituencies, and the inroads made by the saffron party into JD(S) strongholds in Old Mysore region cost the JD(S) dear in over a dozen Assembly constituencies.

In this election JD(S) is fighting in Mandya, Hassan and Kolar. While JD(S) sees itself as an important player in about eight Lok Sabha constituencies in Old Mysore region, it has a good presence in pockets of Kalyana Karnataka and Central Karnataka.

Eye on local body polls

The local leaders are particularly worried about how things will pan out in the to-be-held local body polls. Zilla panchayat and taluk panchayat elections are to be held and in several places urban local bodies elections are also expected.

"In places where the BJP is not strong, the problem may not arise. However, leaders planning to contest local body elections and already working on ground are not sure about their political future where both parties are on equal footing or close in the race," a JD(S) functionary in Bengaluru Rural Lok Sabha constituency feared. In fact, he said JD(S) functionaries and former local body members are trying to avoid joint campaigning, since local BJP leaders who barely have a presence seem to be suddenly getting more importance.

Pockets of insecurity

This insecurity among JD(S) and BJP leaders are high in Bengaluru Rural, Tumakuru, Hassan, Mysuru, Tumakuru and Mandya. A BJP leader in Hassan said that shifting to another party is also not easy for a disgruntled leader in the present political scenario. "As far as JD(S) is concerned, shifting may be easy only where Congress is weak or the local Congress leaders are not strong. For BJP leaders with an ideological bent of mind, moving to Congress is difficult though local elections are fought on political clout and local issues," he said.

In Tumakuru, JD(S) leaders had serious misgivings about joint campaigning for BJP candidate V. Somanna. "Some leaders who have fought BJP tooth and nail are hesitant to work for the BJP. They fear that a joint campaign could become a platform for BJP leaders to identify and poach good leaders at the grassroots in future," a political observer from Turuvekere said. Many in JD(S) believe this led to party leaders moving to Congress.

EC pegs cost of conducting Lok Sabha elections at an estimated ₹520 crore

The State's Finance Department has already approved around ₹400 crore and the remaining will be released based on the actual costs

POLL EXPENSES

Afshan Yasmeen
BENGALURU

It will cost an average of over ₹18.5 crore to elect an MP in the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections, as per the Election Commission's (EC) estimation of expenses for conducting the polls. According to the EC's estimation, the overall expenses are likely to be around ₹520 crore for conducting the Lok Sabha elections in 28 Parliamentary constituencies this time.

Official sources said the State's Finance Department has already approved around ₹400 crore and the remaining will be released based on the actual costs.

During 2023's Assembly polls, the EC had spent ₹511 crore, an average of ₹2.2 crore to elect an MLA. Sources said the expenses are likely to be around ₹7 crore to ₹8 crore more than the Assembly polls. "As the Assembly polls were held just a year ago, there will not be a huge difference in the cost," sources said.

During the previous Assembly election in 2018, the EC had incurred expenses of around ₹394 crore, an average of ₹1.75 crore each constituency. In 2013, the expenditure was around ₹160 crore at an average of ₹65 lakh per constituency.

2019 Lok Sabha polls

In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the EC had spent around ₹413 crore at around ₹14.75 crore per parliamentary constituency. This was a steep increase from the previous election in 2014 when the expenditure was ₹320.16 crore at over ₹11 crore per parliamentary constituency. With price rise and inflation, the cost of poll machinery and infrastructure had seen a steep rise then, officials said.

A file photo of a voting awareness tableau vehicle. During the 2023 Assembly polls, the EC spent ₹511 crore, an average of ₹2.2 crore to elect an MLA.

A major chunk of the budget will be spent on remuneration and training of polling personnel (around three lakh to be deployed) and election observers, transport arrangements (including arranging vehicles for voters with disabilities), preparation of electoral rolls and polling stations, and conducting voter awareness campaigns.

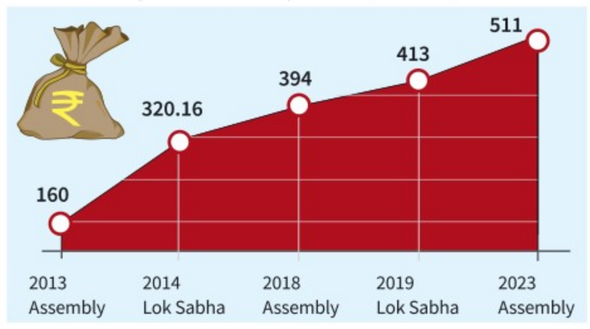
"A major component of our expenses is towards hiring of vehicles including KSRTC buses (around 40 buses per constituency) and videography on the polling day, printing of voter slips and voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) slips and EPIC cards," an official said.

To ensure free and fair elections, web-casting has to be done in all the critical and sensitive polling stations, counting centres and police checkposts where an internet connection is feasible and the remaining videography is done by fixed cameras. Apart from this, expenses will also be incurred on the counting day apart from strong room arrangements, he said.

Other components

"Voter awareness campaigns, distribution of voter slips ahead of the election date, and use of VVPAT (that began for the first time in 2014 Lok Sabha polls) have further pushed up the expenditure. Moreover, the voter population increased from 4.6 crore in 2014 to 5.4 crore this year. The number of polling booths too have gone up from 54,264 in 2014 to 58,871 (including 37 auxiliary polling stations) this year and the related expenditure to provide poll consumables and infrastructure will also be a major component," he explained.

Cost of previous polls (in ₹ crore)



Kumaraswamy and DKS spar over Mekedatu and other irrigation projects

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

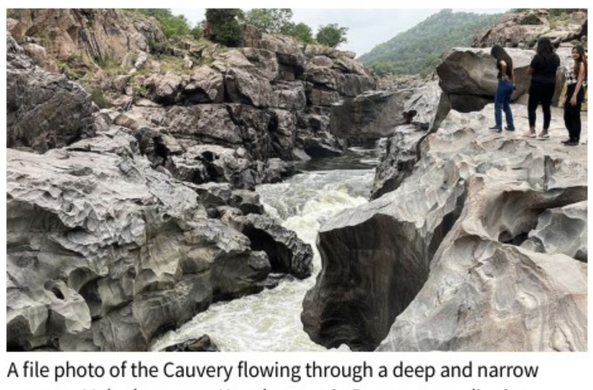
Irrigation projects in Karnataka, particularly Mekedatu balancing reservoir project, triggered a political spat between Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar and former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy on Sunday with the former accusing the latter of not doing anything while in power and Mr. Kumaraswamy terming such allegations as a lie.

Speaking to mediapersons in Bengaluru, Mr. Shivakumar said: "Mr. Kumaraswamy is talking about Mekedatu and Mahadayi now, but he did not do anything when in power. When we undertook padayatra for Mekedatu, he ridiculed us and said we were undertaking padayatra to eat kebabs. He is talking about the yatra now. Looks like Mandya heat is affecting him." Mr. Shivakumar said: "Our fight is for the people of the region and he could not digest it. I have taken up irrigation ministry to build Mekedatu dam. I will deliver at any cost."

Taking serious exception to such remarks, Mr. Kumaraswamy said on social media platform X: "Why are you digging up old things when power is in your hands. Did the power given to your hands by people become weak in just 10 months? You are spreading lies that I did not do anything." He said: "It was during my reign in 2018 that the State government submitted DPR for Mekedatu. You were part of the government. Have you forgotten about this information? In 2006-2007, the State Cabinet allocated ₹100 crore and approved Mahadayi. The project was also launched. What was the Congress government that came afterwards doing?"

The former Chief Minister asked: "Don't you have the information of my meetings with the Centre over the issue of Mekedatu, Mahadayi and other irrigation projects. I have met (Union Minister) Nitin Gadkari alone 10 times. At the ripe age of 90, (former Prime Minister) H.D. Deve Gowda has been raising his voice on irrigation projects both within and outside the Parliament."

When Mr. Gowda raised the Mekedatu issue in Parliament, he said that Congress president and MP from Karnataka (Mallikarjun Kharge) was silent while other members from Congress followed him. "Congress and DMK are alliance partners and DMK has said that it will not allow Mekedatu in its manifesto to which your party is silent."



A file photo of the Cauvery flowing through a deep and narrow gorge at Mekedatu, near Kanakapura, in Ramanagara district.

"Kumaraswamy is talking about Mekedatu and Mahadayi now, but he did not do anything when in power.

D.K. SHIVAKUMAR
Deputy Chief Minister

"It was during my tenure in 2018 that the State government submitted DPR for Mekedatu.

H.D. KUMARASWAMY
Former Chief Minister

BJP petitions EC against BDA's move

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bharatiya Janata Party has petitioned the Election Commission of India against the Bengaluru Development Authority's reported move to raise resources to the tune of ₹1,000 crore to ₹2,000 crore by mortgaging the corner sites in the newly formed Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout in bank for taking infrastructure development works in Shivarama Karanth Layout.

In the petition submitted by a BJP delegation led by former Minister S. Suresh Kumar, the party leaders referred to media reports in this regard and questioned the propriety of taking up such an exercise of raising resources at a time when the state was gearing up for Lok Sabha polls.

Suspecting that the Congress government in the State might be trying to misuse these funds for poll expenses in the name of paying the bills of contractors who have taken up infrastructure development works, the BJP delegation appealed to the Election Commission to prevent BDA from making any payments till the election process was over.

The BJP delegation maintained that it would be a violation of model code of conduct if the BDA was allowed to go ahead with the process of raising resources at the time of elections.

Man loses part of finger in bid to offer blood for Modi's win

Arun Vernekar performing puja to a bust of the PM at his home.

Rishikesh Bahadur Desai
BELAGAVI

The young jeweller and BJP supporter has built a small temple for Mr. Modi at his home and has put up a bust of the PM in the temple

Arun Vernekar, a young man from Sonarwada in Karwar of Uttara Kannada district, accidentally cut off his finger when trying to collect blood to offer to Goddess Kali as he was offering prayers to make Narendra Modi the Prime Minister for a third consecutive time.

He lost the front portion of his forefinger of his left hand when he tried to cut its base with a machete. "I wanted to collect some blood, but the force was stronger than I thought and I chopped off a part of my finger. Now, I will consider it as an offering to the Goddess," he told reporters in Karwar.

After the injury, the finger was still hanging from his hand. He managed to collect the blood and use it to write "*Ma Kali Ma Modi Baba Ka Raksha Karo* [Ma Kali protect our Modi].

While the family members took the victim to the hospital, doctors said it was impossible to fix it and he was advised to sever it completely.

The young jeweller and BJP supporter is a 'die-hard fan' of the Prime Minister. He has built a small temple for Mr. Modi at his home and has put up a bust of the PM in the temple. Underneath is a plaque written "while Mr. Modi is the Pujari of Bharata Mata, I am the Pujari of Modi Baba".

Mr. Vernekar had written a letter to the public in blood in 2014, BJP's first election led by Mr. Modi.

Bengaluru-based academician launches digital database of flora of India

Dr. Sankara Rao, Visiting Professor and Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc, Bengaluru, talks about how he came to collate this unique database

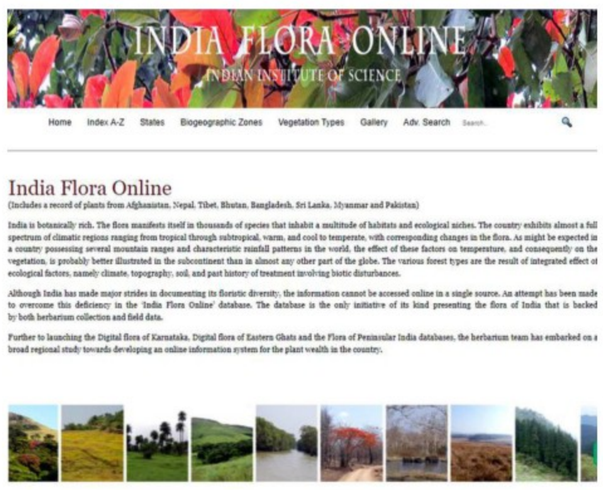
Preeti Zachariah
BENGALURU

Dr. Sankara Rao has been fascinated by plants for as long as he can remember. "When someone scolded me at home, I would go sit on a guava tree, eat fruits and refuse to come home," says Rao, who grew up in a densely vegetated part of Kakinada in East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh. He remembers playing amidst the trees, jumping from branch to branch, spending so much time on them that when his father returned home from work and asked his mother about her son, her standard response would be that he was on a tree. "I think it is inborn," says Rao, who is all set to launch India Flora Online, a digital database of the flora of India, the only such of its kind in the country.

India Flora Online, which also includes a record of plants from Afghanistan, Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Pakistan, is the fourth such plant database initiative he has been instrumental in launching, following Digital Flora of Karnataka (2014), Digital Flora of Eastern Ghats (2019), and Flora of Peninsular India (2019). "I have been working day and night on this," says Rao, pointing out that having an easily accessible resource such as this will offer people knowledge about every plant in the country. "This fulfils the country's need to bring its plant wealth into one searchable source," he believes.

Floral diversity in a lateritic plateau.

Sankara Rao



India Flora Online, the digital database of the flora of India.

Starting a herbarium

Rao, Visiting Professor and Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), has been in charge of the herbarium at CES for around 17 years. It is his "post-retirement work," he says. He took on the role after he retired from IISc's Biochemistry Department in 2001, after working there for nearly 20 years. "Biochemistry is, after all, the functioning of the biological systems, a manifestation of life." He spent the first three years after retirement as an Emeritus Professor before joining CES to take care of the department's herbarium (a collection of plant samples preserved by drying and pressing for long-term study), incidentally one which he had been instrumental in starting decades ago. "I was one of the co-founders of the Herbarium JCB with Father Cecil Saldanha," says Rao, recounting how the two began developing the collection at St. Joseph's College in Bengaluru when they worked together in the 1960s and 70s.

Expeditions around Bengaluru

Rao was already part of St. Joseph's Botany Department when Father Saldanha joined it in 1964 after working at St. Xavier's College in Mumbai (then Bombay). "He came with a specialisation in Botany and wanted to continue his research in it," says Rao. He adds that Saldanha was looking for an associate who was also interested in plants and plant taxonomy when he arrived at St. Joseph's. "He wanted someone with a similar thinking. He found one in me," he says.

He recalls how the two of them would go on expeditions in and around Bengaluru every weekend, collecting all kinds of plants and even purchasing a used jeep that they used on these journeys. "In those days, the suburbs in Bangalore were all forest," says Rao, pointing out that the Bannerghatta Forest used to start near the MICO factory back then. "Bannerghatta, which is in the southern part of the Deccan, was where we collected a lot of plants," he says, remembering how they even encountered wild animals, especially bears, on these trips. "I used to spend much of my spare time with him (Father Saldhana)," he says. Cut to the year 1984. Father Saldanha, who had retired from St. Joseph's at the age of 60, joined IISc, bringing his herbarium collection with him. "He was invited by Madhav Gadgil, the founder of the CES department," says Rao. Sadly, Saldanha passed away less than two years after that, leaving behind this collection of around 16,000 specimens. "They did not know what to do with it, so they came to me," says Rao, who took on the responsibility of managing the plant collection completely in 2007.

Since then, the collection has grown in size and scope, now boasting about 22,000 specimens collected from all over the subcontinent. In 2014, he realised that this information needed to be in the public domain; so he created the first comprehensive online database, *Digital Flora of Karnataka*, which provides details around 4,918 species. The details include the plant's scientific and common names in English and vernacular languages, information about its taxonomy, key identification features, and geographic distribution, besides images of the herbarium sheet from the CES collection, as well as its photographs from the field.

Why document?

Digital Flora of Eastern Ghats and Flora of Peninsular India, both released in 2019, list 4,097 and 10,210 species, while the most recent-India Flora Online-has details of a whopping 15,349 plants found across India. "I have worked only on higher groups of plants: angiosperms (flowering plants), gymnosperms (cone-bearing plants) and ferns," says Rao, who has yet to document fungi, algae and lichens. "I have my limitations," he admits.

According to the Conservation International website, biodiversity hotspots are "places on earth that are both biologically rich and deeply threatened." To qualify as one, a site must meet two criteria: It must have at least 1,500 endemic vascular plants (those with veins to conduct food and nutrients), making it extremely unique, and needs to possess less than 30% of its original natural vegetation, indicating that it is highly endangered.

Of the 36 global biodiversity hotspots, regions uniquely rich in plant and animal life, four major ones are located in India – the Himalayas, the Indo-Burma Region, the Western Ghats, and Sundaland - making the country a treasure trove of natural wealth. "India harbours some major biodiversity hotspots," says Rao, pointing out, however, that collated information about our plant wealth is still lacking.

In the absence of sufficient data about this natural heritage, "people often don't know what is what; what we have lost and what we are left with," he says. "We need to have a reference point." Having this data, particularly on a searchable online database, can go a long way towards conserving ecosystems, benefiting the natural world and indigenous people who depend on these systems for their livelihood, enhancing plant diversity and preserving the germplasm of our cultivated plants, among other things. "It will help to manage, monitor and preserve what we are left with," he believes.

India Flora Online will be launched at IISc's Faculty Hall, Main Building, on Monday, April 8. The event is open to all.

Jubilant Bhartia Foundation and NSRCEL join forces to support start-ups

JBF's initiatives also cover areas which are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals 2030. GETTY IMAGES

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Jubilant Bhartia Foundation (JBF) not for profit organization of Jubilant Bhartia Group with NSRCEL, the start-up incubation hub of the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB) announced their partnership to support ventures poised to make significant strides in sectors critical to India's future.

Start-ups selected for support will operate in key sectors, identified for their transformative potential in Biotechnology and lifescience, agritech, animal nutrition, Electric Vehicle (EV) / lithium-ion battery-related solutions.

JBF's initiatives also cover areas such as community development, healthcare, educational activities, vocational training, women's empowerment, and the promotion of social entrepreneurship which are also aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

Recognising the substantial investment required to drive innovation in these sectors, each selected start-up will receive a minimum grant of 10 lakhs, with the possibility of higher amounts based on milestones achieved.

Anand Sri Ganesh, CEO of NSRCEL, said, "Through this collaboration, JBF is offering funding support to start-ups driving positive change in sectors ranging from biotechnology to agritech, empowering them to achieve their milestones and contribute meaningfully to societal progress."

Thermax comes up with tech for water management in drought-hit Karnataka

The Pune-based energy transition and water management firm says it has designed and developed a slew of solutions to help Karnataka overcome water scarcity

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

To address the recent water scarcity and give a fillip to industries in Karnataka, Thermax, a provider of energy and environment solutions, has developed a slew of water and wastewater solutions, including desalination plants, Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) systems, and indigenous and Mechanical Vapour Recompression (MVR) technologies.

The Pune-based energy transition and water management firm also showcased its latest advancements in green technology and water management specially designed and developed for Karnataka's industrial sector at its REDISCOVER roadshow held in Bengaluru.

Employees of Thermax, a leading provider of energy and environment solutions, at its REDISCOVER Roadshow in Bengaluru. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Wastewater treatment

The exposition featured a line-up of solutions including water and wastewater treatment technologies, multi-fuel and biomass-based energy solutions for waste-to-energy conversion, solar and wind-solar hybrid renewable systems, biogas, electrical/hybrid heating & cooling solutions, and green hydrogen, complemented by digital and value-added services. Thermax's Karnataka special solutions also include desalination plants, Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) systems, and indigenous and Mechanical Vapour Recompression (MVR) technologies.

Ashish Bhandari, MD and CEO, Thermax said, "Karnataka's remarkable growth trajectory has been coupled with a steadfast commitment to sustainability. We are dedicated to empowering industries in the state with bespoke solutions that seamlessly integrate availability with sustainability while ensuring profitability. Bengaluru is emerging as a leader in sustainable technology adoption. We installed our first electric boiler in India in Bengaluru, and in collaboration with a pharmaceutical firm we also installed a biomass-based boiler."

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 8, 1974

Rs. 3-Crore Development Plan for Bangalore

Bangalore, April 7: The Bangalore Municipal Corporation has proposed to spend about Rs. 3 crores for various developmental activities in Bangalore City during the current financial year.

The main emphasis will be on the improvement and maintenance of roads. The corporation has plans to lay eight kilometers of cement concrete road and to asphalt 50 kilometers of roads, during the year.

At present the city has about 1,500 kilometres of road including 100 kilometres of cement concrete road and 250 kilometres of shotcreted roads.

The corporation has been urging the Government to give at least 50 per cent of the revenue accruing from the Motor Vehicle Tax in Bangalore to enable the corporation to maintain roads in a good condition.

Food Processing Units: Karnataka's Plea to Centre

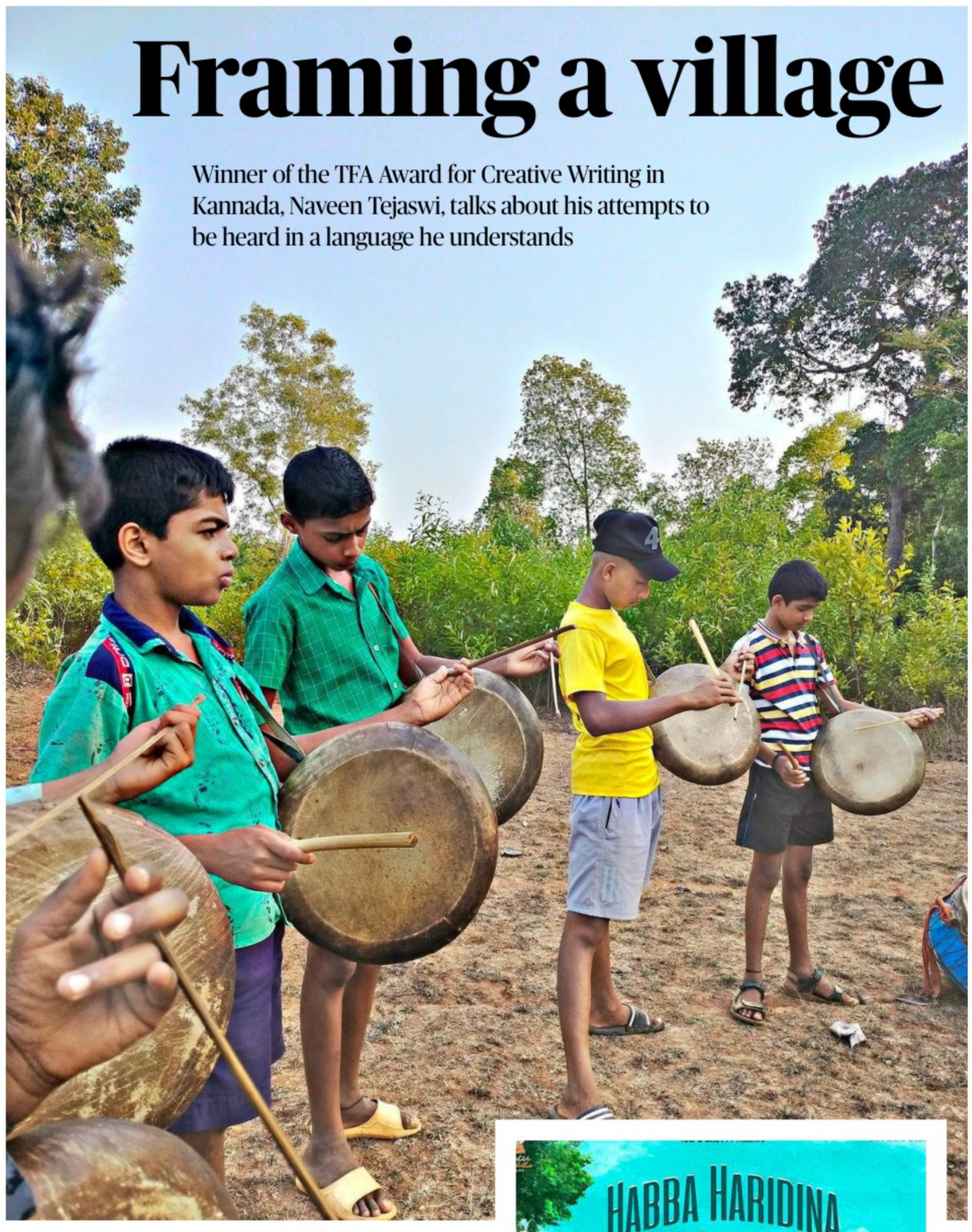
Bangalore, April 7: The State Government has approached the Centre to set up some food processing plants in Karnataka. The intention is to start one such plant in each division at a cost of Rs. 50 lakhs each.

The Union Food Minister, in a personal letter to the State Food Minister has conveyed his support for the proposal.

In fact, a Central team had held discussions with the State Food Minister, Mr. K.H. Patil, and had investigated the possibilities of establishing the plant. The team is likely to submit its proposals to the Government of India.

Framing a village

Winner of the TFA Award for Creative Writing in Kannada, Naveen Tejaswi, talks about his attempts to be heard in a language he understands



Ruth Priyadarshini Dhanaraj

If someone asks me 'Why do you make films?' I tell them it is because it has everything I like – music, photography and acting," says Naveen Tejaswi. Naveen may have won an award for Creative Writing in Kannada from TOTO Funds the Arts, but behind that unassuming mien lies a creative soul who expresses himself through theatre, photography and films.

Hailing from Hosabale in Shivamogga, Naveen is a first generation student from his family and after completing his primary education from his village, came to Bengaluru to pursue a BSc from St Joseph's College. "I wanted to become a scientist, but after a while I realised that though I was good at it, I did not enjoy it."

Launchpad

"I was doing theatre in college and had started watching films. I had come to Bangalore in 2014, and would watch English movies everyday with subtitles to learn the language. Soon, I fell in love with the media." His stay in the city brought him exposure to world cinema, literature and photography, which only fuelled his creativity as he used to write poems, essays and short stories in Kannada, even as a youngster.

Naveen used to work part-time jobs in college and when he was gifted a second hand DSLR camera, he began taking photographs, eventually gaining a proficiency in it. Today, Naveen writes and directs films casting people from his village. So far, Naveen has directed four short films and all of them done the festival circuit. *Bidugade* (Redemption) was a finalist at KIKSFF at California in 2019 and *The Sicklehook* was the official selection for EFF, Khanty Mansi in Russia for 2018.

More recently, his short film *Habba Haridina Suggi Shivaratri* was released on YouTube after it was rejected for its politics by a few film festivals. "Over 100 people from my village have been part of my films shot with minimal or borrowed equipment. They say it takes a village to raise a child – the same holds true for home-grown cinema. I call these my sustainable films."

Though his short stories and films are in Kannada, "Last year I started writing in English too," says Naveen, adding, "Called Track One, it won the Barbra Naidu prize for personal essay writing." It motivated him to keep writing despite initial setbacks. Today, that story is part of St. Joseph's Communicative English syllabus.

"When I first started writing, I used the dialect of my village because that's what I think in. But when it came to validation – from established writers or professors, they couldn't connect to those language patterns and nuances."

Naveen turned down an offer to publish his stories in 2018 because the editors wanted to bring in a lot of changes to the language and approach to make it more suitable. That put a spanner in his imaginative works for almost five years. "During that time I battled with confusion on confidence on what is accepted and what is not. There were no other examples or a reference to the context of social, economic or political background of my village in mainstream media, making it harder to be accepted."

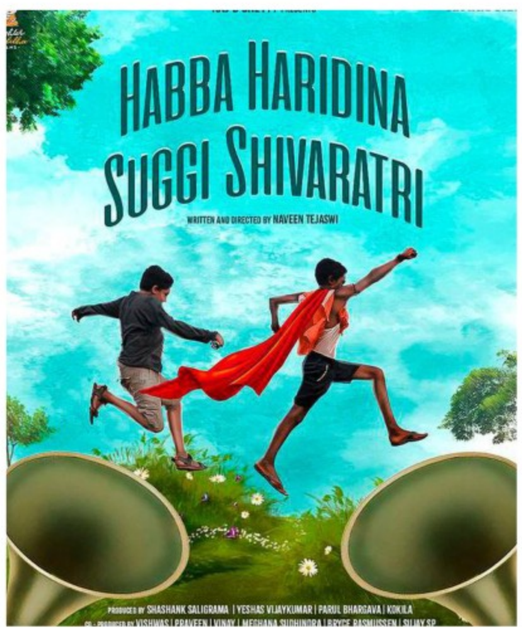
Writer's clock

"In 2023, I finally decided to couldn't stifle it any longer, couldn't wait for the world to say it was okay. So I started writing again. These stories are set in my village which has 300 houses. Of these, perhaps 10 belong to members of the Brahmin community who are the landowners, while the rest of us work for them. We are the first generation to go to school and my stories look at the lives of people in the village.

Naveen has been working on a collection of short stories set in his village. "I am interested in contemporary films and literature. I want to know how different artistes are seeing the world we are living right now."

His winning entry for the TOTO Award were two stories from that collection. "I believe the stories we tell or create stem from the place we live our experiences. Though there are famous writers in Kannada, due to their socio-political backgrounds, I couldn't relate to their work. As a first generation student from an oppressed caste, and even while growing up, I would wonder why the stories of those around me were rarely found in any media."

He agrees that art imitates life , and that, "people in pop culture exist too, but their stories are not real for me. I cannot relate to the things they do. I have come to understand that privilege has a lot to do with making art. Art takes a lot of time and resources. For someone coming from a privileged background these things come easily."



The winner takes it all (clockwise from below) Naveen Tejaswi with his grandmother at his TFA win, the poster for *Vimaana* and the poster of Habba Haridina... and preparations underway for celebrations at launch of the art centre. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

TFA wins

Talking about the stories which won the TFA Award, Naveen says, "One story is called 'Suraghi' – it's a flower whose fragrance lingers for days even after it dries, but it is not used as a temple offering. The story is about a father and his daughter. The father like his father before him have been workers in a Brahmin family for generations now. The story is from the daughter's point of view – she wants to become a pilot when she grows up."

"The other story is 'Bangara,' also the name of a flower called gold-petalled dahlia in English. This is a story about a mother and her daughter. The mother is a single parent and like most women in our village, after her day as a daily wage earner, she sits with them to dehusk areca from 9pm to11pm to supplement her income."

"This lady is 60-years-old now, and her daughter is married and living away. The mother wants to spend more time with her grandchild but not able to. The story explores the dynamics of their relationship, the gap caused by liking and disliking certain things about each other."

Both 'Suraghi' and 'Bangara' won the TFA Award for Creative Writing in Kannada this year. At his acceptance speech, Naveen said he would be using the award money to start an art centre in his village. "It's called Bheema Shale and on April 6, 2024, we will officially launch the centre where we will conducts a camp for spoken English and music.

"My friends from Adavi, a Bengaluru-based collective will teach us to play the *tamate* (a hand drum), while I will take the English class."

The TOTO Awards were instituted 20 years ago by Toto Funds the Arts, a non-profit trust set up in 2004 in memory of Angirus 'Toto' Vellani. The annual Toto Awards are intended to encourage and recognise potential in artists under the age of 30.

A horror-comedy with jump scares and few laughs

FILM REVIEW

Vivek MV

Small-scale Kannada movies that aim to be genre-specific do not actually sway too far from the template of a generic 'mass' entertainer.

Hence, in *Matinee,* directed by Manohar Kaampali, Sathish Ninasam's character enters with the typical 'hero introduction' song.

He also gets two duets (with fellow-actors Rachita Ram and Aditi Prabhudeva), one in each half of the film.

Matinee calls itself a horror-comedy, but it takes a long time to get to its core theme because the screenplay has no solid structure. Four friends go to meet Arun (Sathish) in his mansion.

The meeting, which is supposed to be a reunion, is rocked by supernatural activities in the mansion.

Actors Nagabhushana, Shivaram KR Pete, Sathish, and Poornachandra Mysore are real-life friends too.

They are your traditional 'outsiders' who toiled hard to make a mark in the industry.

Utilising the boisterous chemistry between them, the director had an excellent opportunity to churn out an engaging film.

The fact that they are natural at comedy was an added advantage.

Yet, it remains a fact that even the best of talents require support from a solid script.

Matinee partially reminds you of *Romancham,* the Malayalam sleeper-hit of 2023.

With a focused approach, director Jithu Madhavan produced an enjoyable tale of a group of friends who use an Ouija board and are troubled by the events that follow. However, in *Matinee,*the laughs and scares are few and far between.

The biggest shortcoming is the inappropriate placements of jokes; tending to be more annoying than funny.

Even when Nagabhushana and Shivaram shine with their dialogue delivery, *Matinee* does not explode with big laughs or inventive twists.

The horror genre is a tough nut to crack, and the film's final act is a case in point.

Matinee gets unintentionally funny with its intended scares, and you are appalled at the ridiculous ideas of the director to invoke fear in you.

The overflowing melodrama also makes you wonder if the makers forgot the film was a horror comedy.

Unfortunately, *Matinee* even hints at a sequel in the end... now, that is a jump scare we did not see coming!

Matinee is currently running in theatres

Plot that fails to grip A still from 'Matinee.' SPECIAL ARRABNGEMENT

Matinee (Kannada)

Director: Manohar Kaampali
Cast: Sathish Ninasam, Nagabhushana, Aditi Prabhudeva, Rachita Ram, Shivaram KR Pete, Poornachandra Mysore
Runtime: 133 minutes
Storyline: Arun owns a property in Bengaluru, where he invites his friends for a reunion. However, the bunch of friends are troubled by paranormal activities and get trapped in the house

FILM REVIEW

Black magic drama that fails to bewitch

Vivek MV

Suni's *Avatara Purusha,* a black-magic drama, starring Sharan and Ashika Ranganath, was released in 2022. The film, with an interesting first 15 minutes and a closing portion packed with little surprises, ended with the promise of a worthy second instalment.

Of course, the first part did suffer from the makers' intention to stretch a thin plot into two parts, as the middle portion had sporadic fun and several flat scenes.

The second instalment begins with a small narration about the events of *Avatara Purusha.* Rama Jois (Saikumar), an Ayurveda exponent and his wife Susheela (Bhavya), lose their son Karna in a temple fair with his aunt Yashoda (Sudharani).

The incident creates a rift between Rama and Yashoda. After several years, in her attempt to unite the siblings, Yashoda's daughter Siri (Ashika Ranganath) chooses Anil (Sharan), a junior film artiste, to pretend to be Karna. Anil manages to convince Susheela that he is her long-lost son.

The film ends with the big reveal of Anil's past.

Avatara Purusha 2 starts steadily, with Anil recollecting his dark childhood at a black-magic cult, headed by Dharka (Ashutosh Rana).

Anil escapes from the world of witchcraft and reforms himself under a spiritual teacher. However, he realises that Dharka is targeting Rama and his family as they have a the crucial gemstone, the key to entering Trishanku Loka, a rare world neither belonging to heaven nor earth. The onus falls on Anil to save the family.

Sharan's charm makes the film watchable, but only to an extent, as he saves several banal humorous scenes with his comic timing. However, once the film enters the supernatural zone, *Avatara Purusha 2* goes haywire. It fails to transport us into the eerie world of witchcraft and magic. The scenes feel shoddily joined together as the film suffers from a lack of rhythm, and the final showdown between Anil and Dharka does not blow our minds away.

The second instalment is also low on entertainment quotient. The film has no engaging drama on display, and the final output feels compromised, with tacky visual effects and ordinary sets.

Avatara Purusha 2 is Suni's second release of the year after *Ondu Sarala Prema Kathe.*

Like all Suni films, this one also has crackling ideas that do not come together perfectly to offer us a consistently engaging viewing experience. That said, the director's movies have gained delayed acceptance from the masses.

That is the least Suni would hope for if his latest fails to draw people to theatres.

Avatara Purusha 2 is running in theatres.

Despite the challenges Sharan sails through in 'Avatara Purusha 2.' SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Avatara Purusha 2 (Kannada)

Director: Suni
Cast: Sharan, Ashika Ranganath, Saikumar, Sudharani, Ashutosh Rana
Runtime: 124 minutes
Storyline: A junior cine artist posing as a long-lost son, must fight to save a family from an evil black magician.

Church screens *The Kerala Story* for catechism students

It was meant to create awareness among students, says Idukki diocese of Syro-Malabar Church

Sandeep Vellaram
IDUKKI

The Idukki diocese of the Syro-Malabar Church appears to have stepped into a political minefield by screening the allegedly Islamophobic movie *The Kerala Story* for catechism students on Sunday.

Father Jins Karakkat, chairman of the Idukki Diocese Media Commission, told *The Hindu* that the diocese also distributed a booklet on "love". He said the booklet spelt out the perils of "love jihad", arguably a conspiracy theory of Islamists allegedly using intimacy as a cover to recruit impressionable Christian and Hindu youth to the jihadist cause. He claimed the Church had screened the movie to create awareness of the issue among students hailing from the Syro-Malabar community.

DD screens movie

The Church's controversial move comes after a political row broke out in Kerala last week after the national broadcaster Doordarshan telecast the movie, despite strident opposition from the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF).

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan had accused the Union government of sanctioning the movie's broadcast to allegedly stoke sectarian divisions and cause communal polarisation in Kerala with an eye on the Hindu votes in the Lok Sabha election. Both appealed to the DD to desist from screening the deeply schismatic movie, to no avail. The UDF and the LDF also moved the Election Commission of India (EC) against the broadcast.

The LDF and the UDF worry that the spat over the broadcasting of the allegedly divisive film might take on a new level of vitriol and perhaps focus the Lok Sabha campaign on communally divisive issues. Moreover, the opposing alliance were acutely aware that the BJP had used the production as a contentious campaign tool in the 2023 Assembly elections in Karnataka, which the Congress won.

BJP stance

However, the BJP struck a contrarian note. Union Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan said those opposed to the film seemed scared of dissenting points of view. Moreover, he added that the Censor Board had cleared the film for screening and that there was nothing illegal in DD telecasting the production. The "love jihad" controversy surfaced in Kerala in 2021 after Mar Joseph Kallarangatt, Bishop of Palai, flagged the existence of such an alleged conspiracy.

'INDIA bloc corrupt, its leaders either in jail or out on bail'

Campaigning for the BJP's candidate from the Chidambaram Lok Sabha seat in Tamil Nadu, Nadda says Oppn. parties striving to save their dynasty, families from illegal practices

The Hindu Bureau
TIRUCHI

The entire INDIA bloc is a "conglomeration of only corrupt parties" striving to save their dynasty and families from corrupt practices, BJP national president J.P. Nadda said at a Lok Sabha election campaign in Tamil Nadu's Ariyalur on Sunday.

He added that the leaders of the Opposition alliance are either in jail or out on bail, and its style of functioning is aimed at "saving corrupt persons".

Campaigning for the BJP's candidate from the Chidambaram (SC reserved) Lok Sabha seat, P. Karthiyayini, Mr. Nadda said Congress leaders such as Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, P. Chidambaram, and his son and sitting MP Karthi Chidambaram are out on bail, while Delhi Chief Minister and AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal and some of his Cabinet colleagues are in jail.

J.P. Nadda campaigns for P. Karthiyayini, the BJP's candidate from the Chidambaram seat, in Ariyalur on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Naming leaders of the Congress, the NC, the RJD, the DMK, the SP, the PDP, the BRS, the NCP, the SAD, and the Shiv Sena (UBT), he alleged that they were all "family parties" striving to save their dynasty and family members. On the other hand, he said, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was trying his best to fight corruption. Mr. Nadda said NC leader Farooq Abdullah is involved in an alleged scam in the Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association, RJD chief Lalu Prasad in fodder and land-for-jobs cases, and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav in laptop and foodgrain cases. Ministers from Trinamool Congress are also in jail, he said.

The BJP national president said the DMK stands for "Dynasty, Money swindling, and Katta panchayat (holding kangaroo courts)" and claimed that Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and his son, Udhayanidhi, have committed "corrupt practices" and "amassed assets" beyond their income.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday

TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Heavy rainfall/snowfall very likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh. Heat wave conditions very likely in isolated places over Rayalaseema, Telangana, North & South Interior Karnataka

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	32.0	26.8	Kozhikode	—	37.6	29.5
Ahmedabad	—	38.8	23.8	Kurnool	—	43.3	29.2
Aizawl	—	35.6	18.8	Lucknow	—	37.5	21.6
Allahabad	—	40.6	21.8	Madurai	—	39.8	25.6
Bengaluru	—	37.2	24.0	Mangaluru	—	35.0	26.9
Bhopal	—	35.8	23.8	Mumbai	—	33.5	26.5
Bhubaneswar	—	37.2	27.8	Mysuru	—	37.6	—
Chandigarh	—	33.8	16.7	New Delhi	—	35.9	15.8
Chennai	—	37.0	27.3	Patna	—	37.2	26.3
Coimbatore	—	39.6	26.0	Port Blair	—	32.4	25.2
Dehradun	—	33.6	16.0	Puducherry	—	35.6	26.6
Gangtok	—	24.4	14.7	Pune	—	39.5	25.5
Goa	—	33.7	25.8	Raipur	—	42.6	23.5
Guwahati	—	37.8	22.6	Ranchi	—	33.8	23.3
Hubballi	—	40.0	23.0	Shillong	—	27.8	16.4
Hyderabad	—	40.7	27.7	Shimla	—	24.5	13.3
Imphal	—	32.2	19.5	Srinagar	—	22.4	5.5
Jaipur	—	36.8	22.0	Thiruvananthapuram	—	34.6	28.0
Kochi	—	33.6	29.6	Tiruchi	—	40.7	26.0
Kohima	—	25.4	15.2	Vijayawada	—	40.4	26.6
Kolkata	—	30.0	27.6	Visakhapatnam	—	33.6	28.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	7	17	33	119	103	
Bengaluru	10	17	27	92	105	
Chennai	6	8	98	55	56	
Delhi	50	76	45	241	305	
Hyderabad	21	9	31	70	83	
Kolkata	6	8	59	55	80	
Lucknow	12	8	47	111	128	
Mumbai	5	40	30	71	87	
Pune	25	2	76	88	135	
Visakhapatnam	14	41	18	54	95	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Dhanbad, Jharkhand recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 313 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu recorded a healthy AQI score of 34

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Jagan gets notice for 'disparaging remarks' against Naidu at rally

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Mukesh Kumar Meena on Sunday issued notice to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, seeking an explanation within 48 hours of receiving the notice, on the disparaging comments he allegedly made against Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief N. Chandrababu Naidu at Puthalapattu on April 3. He reportedly said that that Mr. Naidu was a "habitual offender".

The complaint lodged by TDP Polit Bureau member Varla Ramaiah would otherwise be sent to the Election Commission of India (EC) for appropriate action, the CEO said in the notice.

Mr. Meena said in the notice that he found the comments/posts by the Chief Minister to be, *prima facie*, in violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), while pointing out that the EC had issued an advisory to political parties on the plummeting level of public discourse during campaigning.

The advisory had said political parties and candidates in general, and the star campaigners in particular, should maintain decorum, the CEO stated.

Another BRS MLA joins Congress

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Tellam Venkat Rao, Bhadrachalam MLA of BRS, joined the Congress in the presence of Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy.

Mr. Venkat Rao is the third MLA to quit BRS and join the Congress. Kadiyam Srihari and Danam Nagender are the other MLAs who deserted the BRS.

Respite in the high ranges

Cool corner: While Kerala is reeling under intense summer heat, there are still pockets that experience good weather, such as the hilly Idukki district. A view from the mist-covered hills at Kodikuthy near Kuttikkanam on Sunday morning. JOMON PAMPAVALLEY

Kishan challenges Rahul to debate on Cong. guarantees

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP president G. Kishan Reddy has challenged Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to a public debate, either at the Hyderabad Press Club or Delhi Press Club, on the implementation of the poll guarantees in the State after coming to power.

"Mr. Gandhi has boasted about sticking to his promises made in the manifesto at the Tukkuguda public meeting without bothering to check if the guarantees made during the [Assembly] polls are being implemented here," he said, in a late Saturday night media release.

The BJP leader said the Congress once again promising guarantees is like the devil quoting the scriptures as it had failed to implement those in the last 100 days in Telangana. "If Mr. Gandhi has any guts, he should accept my challenge for a debate. I will participate on behalf of Telangana people," he said.

Mr. Kishan sought to remind that the ₹2 lakh farm loan waiver, ₹4,000 stipend for the unemployed, and other guarantees were not implemented thus far and ridiculed the Congress leader for promising to take up the schemes throughout the country.

He blamed the Congress for the poor representation of the Backward Classes (BCs) in the central bureaucracy as the recruitment for IAS posts was taken up on a big scale under its UPA regime. The Congress had never made a BC member the Prime Minister while the Modi government had given constitutional status to the BC Commission and included 27 OBCs in the Cabinet, he said.

Rajya Sabha MP K. Laxman accused the Congress of cheating Telangana people by not implementing the guarantees but promising the same throughout the country.

Seizure of ₹3.98 cr. lands Nainar Nagenthran in the soup

S. Vijay Kumar
R. Srikanth
CHENNAI

In what could potentially cause trouble for the BJP's Tirunelveli Lok Sabha candidate, Nainar Nagenthran, election officials on Saturday night seized ₹3.98 crore from three passengers associated with him, on board the Nellai Express at the Tambaram railway station.

Largest seizure

This is the single largest seizure of unaccounted cash in Tamil Nadu since the model code of conduct came into force.

According to police sources, the first accused in the case, who could not account for the money, gave a statement to the flying squad claiming that the money was meant for distribution to voters in the Tirunelveli constituency, from where Mr. Nagenthran is contesting.

Acting on information that a huge amount of cash was being carried in the train, Assistant Agriculture Officer Senthil Balamani, who was heading a flying squad, rushed to the Tambaram railway station around 8.30 p.m.

When the team checked the baggage of three suspects in a two-tier AC coach, they found several wads of ₹500-denomination notes.

The passengers – S. Satish, 33, S. Naveen, of Agaram in Chennai, and S. Perumal of Srivaikundam in Thoothukudi district – were detrained and taken to the Tambaram police station, where election officials interrogated them on the source of the money and its destination.

Have come back to A.P. to end murder politics, says Sharmila

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee president Y.S. Sharmila on April 7 (Sunday) said that after successfully completing the task of dislodging an "autocrat" like K. Chandrasekhar Rao in neighbouring Telangana State, she has now come to Andhra Pradesh to put an end to the 'murder politics' in Kadapa district.

The Congress president was responding to the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders' demand for an explanation on why she had suddenly migrated from Telangana to Andhra Pradesh ahead of the elections. "The task at hand there was to overthrow KCR's autocratic regime. Now, the task at hand here is to defeat my opponent from the ruling party, Y.S. Avinash Reddy, and free Kadapa from murder politics," she reiterated.

As part of her 'Andhra Pradesh Nyay Yatra', Ms. Sharmila, who is contesting the coming Lok Sabha election from Kadapa constituency, called on the family of A. Chinna Subbarayudu at Yadavapuram village of Pendlimarri mandal in Kamalapuram constituency, whose two out of three sons were allegedly killed by the followers of Mr. Avinash Reddy.

The Congress president alleged that there was no sign of development anywhere in the State.

Shivakumar attacks BJP, CPI(M) in Alappuzha rally

The Hindu Bureau
ALAPPUZHA

The Union government that is targeting leaders of Opposition parties across the country using the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) is protecting Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his daughter, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar has said.

He was addressing a campaign rally of United Democratic Front (UDF) candidate for Alappuzha Lok Sabha constituency K.C. Venugopal at Cherthala on Sunday. "While the BJP is targeting Opposition leaders elsewhere, it is not initiating any action against Kerala Chief Minister and his family. This shows that there has been an unholy nexus between the BJP and the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kerala. Any vote for the LDF in Kerala in the Lok Sabha polls is a vote for the BJP," Mr. Shivakumar said.

Poll mode: Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar campaigning in Cherthala on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

He slammed the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in Kerala for keeping K. Krishnankutty as a Minister. "The BJP and the Janata Dal (Secular) are in a tie-up in Karnataka. At the same time, a member of the JD(S) is a Minister in the LDF government in Kerala," he said.

Mr. Shivakumar said the LDF rule had pushed Kerala into a financial crisis. He said the BJP was trying to murder democracy in the country.

Kannur bomb blast: 2 more held; search on for other suspects

The Hindu Bureau
KANNUR

In the ongoing investigation into the Panoor bomb blast, the police have arrested two more suspects on Sunday.

Under the leadership of district police chief Ajith Kumar and Koothuparamba Assistant Commissioner of Police K.V. Venugopalan, a specialised team led by Panoor Inspector Premsadan has already arrested four individuals, including Athul, Arun, Shibin Lal, and Sayuj, in connection with the case. Two more suspects – Amal Babu and Mithun – have been arrested. The police said they have identified a total of 12 individuals who were present in the vicinity of the blast. While 31-year-old Sherin lost his life, Vineesh, Vinod, and Ashwanth sustained injuries in the explosion and are receiving medical treatment.

Meanwhile, the police are hunting for key suspects Shijal and Akshay.

Acting on information provided by Shibin Lal, one among the arrested, the investigation team recovered seven steel bombs concealed in bushes within a deserted field. The police suspect these explosives were moved from the construction site immediately following the blast. The police and dog squads are conducting thorough inspections in Panoor, Koothuparamba, Kolavallur and adjoining areas of Kannur and Kozhikode.

Wayward elephant

Price stability must remain non-negotiable

The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has opted to keep the benchmark policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5% for a seventh consecutive meeting citing food price pressures that are impeding its efforts to slow inflation to the 4% target on a durable basis. Explaining the rate decision and the MPC's resolve to keep the policy stance focused on the withdrawal of accommodation, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das remarked that the 'elephant in the room – inflation', which had hit a peak of 7.8% in April 2022, 'appeared to be returning to the forest after having gone out for a walk'. "We would like the elephant to return to the forest and remain there on a durable basis," he said, emphasising that in the best interest of the economy, it was essential to ensure that retail inflation continued to moderate and aligned to the target on a durable basis. The monetary authority's repeated emphasis on 'a durable basis' underlines its concern that headline inflation and food price inflation in particular have remained stubbornly unpredictable, with the headline Consumer Price Index-based reading stuck above the RBI's 4% target for 53 months through February 2024. Nor are the MPC's projections for price stability in the new fiscal year significantly reassuring in terms of the target: CPI inflation is expected to slow slightly to an average of 4.9% in the current quarter, then decelerate markedly and dip below target to 3.9% in Q2, before quickening again to 4.6% and 4.5% in Q3 and Q4, respectively.

The MPC is, however, more confident about the outlook for economic growth in the 12 months through March 2025, with the GDP expected to expand by 7% on average this year. For this it cites a multiplicity of factors: from expectations of a normal south-west monsoon, that it posits will boost agricultural activity and rural demand, to sustained momentum in the manufacturing and services sectors. It also points to the RBI's March round of the consumer confidence survey, which indicates that urban households are less pessimistic about the current situation and anticipate improvements in one year's time on all five key parameters surveyed. Monetary policymakers assert that improving incomes and a rise in readiness to spend on non-essentials augur well for a strengthening in private consumption, which has been struggling for momentum in recent quarters. It is the expectation of strong growth that gives the RBI the policy space to focus on targeting inflation, Mr. Das said. Only too aware that sticky inflation has not only dampened discretionary spending so far but also led to a sharp surge in personal loans for meeting essential expenditure, the RBI chief's determination to send the elephant back to the forest or risk seeing growth lose momentum again is well justified. Price stability can and must be non-negotiable.

Beat the heat

Large gatherings, political or not, must be avoided in summer

With the advent of summer, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned that more heatwaves are likely than last year. Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra are expected to be particularly vulnerable. Heatwave days are defined as when day temperatures in a place are at least 4.5° C above normal or greater than 45° C on two consecutive days. For several years on the trot now, the IMD has been forecasting hotter summers. The causes are multi-fold. India is battling an El Niño wave, that, in most years, dries up rainfall and contributes to elevated temperatures. Though the El Niño and its converse, La Niña, are cyclical, there is also the larger phenomenon of warming temperatures (El Niño) causing accelerated melting in the Arctic, a drying up of moisture-laden tropical wind and, consequently, fewer clouds, and, thus, dry, baking ground temperatures.

This year, the weather agency's warnings are more portentous as millions are expected to queue up outside polling stations in India over several afternoons in April and May. Last April, at a mid-day, open-air public, political function in Navi Mumbai, 12 people died due to dehydration and 600 had to be hospitalised. Some of the speakers in fact congratulated the crowd for 'braving' the heat before the disaster unfolded. This highlights the degree of disregard that the governmental machinery accords to the public-health impacts of heatwaves. This election year, for instance, the Election Commission of India had already issued an advisory to its State electoral officers – ahead of the IMD's public heat warnings – to prepare for the polls amid blistering heat. The trouble is that these advisories are too generic. There is a perfunctory note to provide for oral rehydration supplements and mothers to avoid bringing children with them to the polling booths. There is no requirement that polling stations prioritise cooling beyond the confines of the rooms where the officers are seated. There has been, for many years, a suggestion, even by prominent politicians, for elections to be held in the relatively more clement months of February-March or October-November but it is one that loses traction almost immediately after the polls. India's size and logistical challenges have seen the electoral process innovate and adopt measures such as multi-phase polling and even the use of electronic ballots. With temperature records collapsing every year and the links between heatwaves, climate and health becoming even more explicit, it is time that the electoral process mulls over creative ways to account for the crisis.

Shaping India's path to inclusive health care

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Dr. K.S. Uplabdh Gopal
is a health-care professional

World Health Day, which is observed every year on April 7, unites us around health equity, an essential topic at the heart of global health and justice. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared health to be a fundamental human right. The theme this year is "My Health, My Right".

There is an alarming gap in health-care access, highlighted by the COVID-19 epidemic, environmental crises, and growing socio-economic gaps. Even though over 140 nations recognise health as a constitutional right, the WHO Council on the Economics of Health for All reports that more than half the world's population needs complete access to essential health services. With the passage of World Health Day 2024, it is clear that promoting health equity is a source of optimism for millions of people, going beyond social justice or legislative change.

The meaning of health equity

Health equity ensures that every person has an equal opportunity to achieve their highest health potential, no matter what their circumstances. Recognising that social, economic, and environmental factors impact health outcomes, this idea goes beyond genetics. WHO's mission is to eliminate unfair and preventable disparities in health among different social and economic categories.

True health equity addresses the root causes of health inequities such as poverty, discrimination, limited access to high-quality education, a healthy diet, clean water, fresh air, and housing, and merely grants equal access to health care. For example, a child born into poverty in a rural area has no access to clean water, wholesome food, or immunisations, which lays the foundation for chronic health problems.

These differences are made worse by pandemics, climate change, and sociopolitical unrest. India is diverse and has wide socioeconomic gaps. Thus this predicament strikes a chord. Access to health care in rural areas is significantly less than in metropolitan areas. Social and economic barriers exacerbate this disparity.

To guarantee that everyone may live a healthy life, attaining health equity necessitates a comprehensive strategy that goes beyond legislative reform to address the socioeconomic determinants of health. Realising each person's potential for health demands a concerted effort by governments, communities, and individuals to tear down these obstacles.

The road to health equity is fraught with difficulties, ranging from deeply ingrained social injustices to global systemic health concerns, particularly in multicultural countries such as India. Diverse populations need help to get access to high-quality health care in this place.

The global challenges are: The fight for health equity confronts global challenges that transcend borders and call for collective international action. The COVID-19 pandemic has starkly revealed that infectious diseases target marginalised and vulnerable groups the most, thus widening the health equity gap. Climate change poses a serious health risk since it disproportionately impacts low-income and vulnerable people. The health-care provision is severely hampered by conflicts, which destroy infrastructure, uproot communities, and shut off access to vital medical services.

> India's health equity issues require a comprehensive approach that goes beyond improvements in health-care facilities

India's health equity challenge

With a large and diversified population, India faces persistent obstacles to health equity, including notable differences in health-care outcomes and access. Even though access to health care has improved over the past 20 years, there is still much work to be done in rural India. According to the 2011 Census, urban slums make up over 17% of India's metropolitan areas, and exhibit serious health disparities. Health risks are increased by overcrowding, poor sanitation, and restricted access to clean water. Infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis, are 1.5 times more common in slums than in non-slum areas, according to the Indian Council of Medical Research.

Disparities across caste and gender are profound. National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 (2019-21) data indicates that Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes experience higher child mortality and lower immunisation rates. Additionally, 59% of women in the lowest wealth quintile suffer from anaemia, almost double the rate in the highest quintile, demonstrating the intersection of caste, gender, and economic status in health outcomes.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) account for more than 60% of all fatalities in India. The Public Health Foundation of India points out the necessity for equitable treatment access and preventive health care, stating that the economic effect of NCDs could surpass $6 trillion by 2030.

A critical shortage of doctors exacerbates these issues, with WHO data indicating only 0.8 doctors per 1,000 people, which is below the advised ratio. Even though over 75% of health-care professionals work in metropolitan regions, which only account for 27% of the population, the shortage is particularly severe in rural areas. If other medical practitioners are considered, the ratio might be balanced.

India's health equity issues require a comprehensive approach beyond improvements in health-care facilities to address more extensive socioeconomic determinants of health. To move India toward universal health coverage and a more equitable future, the government, civil society, health-care providers, and communities need to work together.

Governments and officials may influence the state of health through funding, creative policies, and laws. For instance, India's Ayushman Bharat initiative provides free health coverage to the bottom 40% economically, demonstrating a commitment to reducing health disparities.

The National Health Mission (NHM), which includes both the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM), reduces the health-care gap between rural and urban India by expanding access, strengthening infrastructure, and providing essential services to vulnerable populations.

Achieving health equity requires raising health literacy. India should turn health equality into a shared, community-driven goal by including health education in the NHM, enabling its people to seek equitable care and make educated health decisions.

Together with the government, the public and private health-care sectors provide services to underprivileged communities, emphasising preventive education, workforce development, and infrastructure enhancement.

Non-governmental organisations and civic societies engage in direct community outreach to draw attention to and resolve regional health concerns. Their collaboration with international and governmental organisations allows them to tailor health initiatives that are culturally sensitive to the community's unique needs.

International institutions such as WHO, the Global Fund, and Gavi support health initiatives in places with limited resources and promote sharing information and resources to enhance health-care systems, especially in countries such as India.

Through innovation and technical growth, particularly in digital health, the commercial sector and charitable organisations advance accessibility and affordability while extending reach and efficacy.

Research institutes and academic institutions offer crucial insights into health inequalities and the efficacy of interventions, assisting in creating evidence-based practices and policies supported by scientific studies.

Tap these organisations

Organisations with a strong local presence are essential for health equity. They actively participate in every phase, from planning to evaluation, to guarantee the relevance and effectiveness of health programmes. They also have a thorough understanding of their community's requirements.

Successful collaborations, essential for achieving health equity, depend on open communication, respect for one another, and common goals. They are prepared to adapt to shifting health concerns and community demands because they strongly emphasise empowering communities, sharing knowledge, and building capacity.

Effective collaboration among many sectors, ranging from policymakers to grassroots organisations, may significantly enhance health equity and pave the path for a time when access to high-quality health care would be a shared reality rather than a privilege.

The views expressed are personal

Gone too soon — the subject of youth suicide in India

Dr. Lakshmi Vijayakumar
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Suicide is the tragic and untimely loss of human life, all the more devastating and perplexing because it is a conscious volitional act.

India has the dubious distinction of having the highest number of suicides in the world. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports that 1.71 lakh people died by suicide in 2022. The suicide rate has increased to 12.4 per 1,00,000 – the highest rate ever recorded in India. But these figures are underestimated due to an inadequate registration system, the lack of medical certification of death, stigma and other factors. Unfortunately, 41% of all suicides are by young people below the age of 30. Suicide is the leading cause of mortality for young women in India. A young Indian dies by suicide every eight minutes, which is a loss to family, society, the economy and future of the country. Suicide in the young is a major public health problem in India.

There is no single factor

Suicide is a complex human behaviour and it is futile to locate a single causative factor. Suicide in young people is best understood as multidetermined and the result of interaction between biological, psychological, familial, and social cultural factors.

A current review of adolescent suicides in India shows that the most commonly reported risk factors were mental health problems (54%), negative or traumatic family issues (36%), academic stress (23%), social and lifestyle factors (20%), violence (22%), economic distress (9.1%) and relationship factors (9%). Physical and sexual abuse, examination failure, intergenerational conflicts, parental pressures and caste discrimination are associated with youth suicide.

There are specific sociocultural factors for suicide among young girls and women. Arranged and early marriages, young motherhood, low social status, domestic violence and economic dependence are well documented. Rigid gender roles and discrimination have also been implicated. Failure in examinations drove 2,095 people to suicide in 2022. A system of education with an emphasis on scoring marks, and a one-point examination system, along with parental pressure and high expectation from oneself and the educational institutions contribute to suicides. Enormous competition to get into colleges, media hype around results, the shame associated with failure, and months of pent-up pressures and emotions result in a highly emotionally wrought state. Competitive examinations have also pushed many students to the edge. Tragically, even after obtaining a seat in prestigious professional colleges, academic pressure has led to many suicides.

> No young lives should be lost by suicide in India due to silence and inaction

Alcohol and substance use are known risk factors in youth suicides. The last two decades have witnessed a marked increase in Internet use among the young. A meta-analysis from 19 States of India revealed that almost 20% of college students are net addicts. One-third of young people are cyber-bullied. And of this sub-set, one third are suicidal. Teens who used social media for more than two hours a day are more suicidal.

The media has a strong influence on vulnerable young people. Sensational reporting of suicide, particularly by a celebrity, is followed by increased suicidal behaviour. Following the death of a very popular young male actor in India, there was a significant increase in searches on Google on "how to commit suicide".

There are solutions

The view that suicides cannot be prevented is a commonly held one as people believe that it is an individual's choice. Or it is because of socio-economic factors which are beyond their control. For an overwhelming majority of young people who engage in suicidal behaviour, there is often an alternate, appropriate resolution of their problems. Young people can be taught problem solving, impulse control and emotional regulation skills along with improving help-seeking behaviour. Early identification of mental distress and provision of care in a youth-friendly environment are essential. Adopting a healthy lifestyle (a good diet, regular physical activity, moderate and appropriate use of the Internet, cultivating supportive friendships, yoga and meditation) improves mental health and reduces suicide in the young.

Improving the family environment by reducing domestic violence and alcohol consumption, and providing economic assistance to the needy have been shown to reduce suicidal behaviour. Educational reforms such as alternative assessment methods and provisions to explore the potential of a young person are needed. Societal changes to reduce stigma and discrimination based on caste, religion and sexuality need to be addressed. Political will, intersectoral collaboration and commitment, and community participation are needed.

A strategy that needs more visibility

The Ministry of Health constituted a task force in November 2019 to develop a National Suicide Prevention Strategy for India. The final strategy was launched on November 21, 2022 with the objective of reducing suicide by 10% by 2030.

The strategy has recognised that collaboration between the Ministries of Health, Education, Information and Broadcasting, and Social Welfare is essential. The strategy focuses on the need to leverage educational institutions and youth organisations to promote mental health and reduce substance and behavioural addictions through school health ambassadors and youth clubs.

The immediate task is to disseminate the strategy to all States in India and stakeholders. Budgetary allocations are necessary and the strategies need to be implemented at the earliest at the State, district and community levels.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

On the campaign trail

With campaigning for the general election heating up, so too are the campaign tactics of the two major contenders in the political battle, the Bharatiya Janata Party and the INDIA bloc. While the Prime Minister has taken up the familiar path, of polarisation, even dubbing the manifesto of the Congress as bearing 'the the stamp of Muslim League', the INDIA bloc leaders are overtly playing the caste card. After 10 years of rule, the ruling party should be talking about its achievements. But, strangely, it is still talking as if it is in the opposition. The common man is left wondering about the fate of livelihood issues which are not discussed.

J. Anantha Padmanabhan,
Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

No more arrests

It is good that Sri Lanka has made it clear that there is "no need for more talks on the 'resolved' Katchatheevu issue". What is more important now is to ensure that fishermen from Tamil Nadu are not arrested on the pretext of having crossed the international maritime boundary line.

A. Jainulabdeen,
Chennai

Implementing universal health coverage

Aruna Bhattacharya

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Universal health coverage (UHC) signifies universal accessibility to comprehensive, high-quality health services, without financial hardship. UHC ensures that people receive care whenever and where ever they need it. It covers the full continuum of essential health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care. The delivery of these services relies on strong, efficient, and equitable health systems deeply rooted in the communities. UHC is built on the ethos of strengthening primary healthcare to ensure that all health needs are addressed in an integrated manner, supported by a well-equipped health and care workforce.

On December, 12, 2012, the UN General Assembly unanimously endorsed a resolution urging countries to accelerate progress towards UHC. In India, the high level expert group report, submitted to the Planning Commission in 2011, outlined a government intent to increase public financing for health to 2.5% of India's GDP during the 12th Plan (2012-17). The economic growth of the country makes this increase feasible. The National Health Policy, 2017 articulates "the attainment of the highest possible level of good health and well-being, and universal access to good quality health care services without anyone having to face financial hardship as a consequence" as its goal, which aligns with the UHC target.

Right to health

India lacks a constitutional provision for the fundamental right to basic health. However, the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV of the Constitution provides a basis for the right to health. Article 39 (e) of the Constitution directs the state to secure the health of workers; Article 42 emphasises just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief; and Article 47 casts a duty on the state to raise the nutrition levels and standard of living, and to improve public health. The Constitution not only mandates the state to enhance public health but also endows the panchayats and municipalities to strengthen public health under Article 243G.

The theme of International UHC day is 'Health for all: Time for Action' and of World Health Day is 'my health - my right'. How should access to health be envisaged? Given that health is a state subject and the UHC policy is envisaged at the national level, there is a need for discourses on implementation. India has a large migrant population: the total number of inter-State migrant workers was about 41 million (Census 2011), and the total migration rate was 28.9% (Periodic Labour Force Survey, 2020-21). With 49% of the population living in urban slums, according to UN-Habitat/World Bank, the focus should be on ensuring the availability and accessibility of primary health services.

Isaiah Berlin spoke about two types of freedom. The first is 'freedom from' or negative freedom; the second is 'freedom to' or positive freedom. 'Freedom from' means the absence of obstacles or constraints, whereas 'freedom to' recognises the possibility of autonomously determining and achieving individual or collective purposes. The discourse on health as a human right must be seen as the second freedom, where every citizen has the possibility to achieve health and wellness as part of their rights to access to public health.

The constitutional right to health is critical to breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and poor health that will otherwise continue to perpetuate inequality in all spheres of life, including education, opportunity, wealth, and social mobility.

The two critical components of the UHC policy – strengthening primary healthcare and reducing out-of-pocket expenditure – demand focused attention. To align electoral mandates with UHC implementation, political leaders should consider the following suggestions.

The two critical components of the UHC policy – strengthening primary healthcare and reducing out-of-pocket expenditure – demand focused attention

Four suggestions

The first is to address urban migrants' health needs, and reforms in informal sectors. Given the surge in migration and mobility, primary healthcare needs a shift in vision. There is a need to include the element of mobility and portability of access to health care services to aid continuity of treatment.

The second is to simplify the reimbursement processes for reducing out-of-pocket expenditure. The design of cash transfers and reimbursement in India's public healthcare system needs adaptation for migrant and marginalised communities.

The third is to create inclusive health systems. We need to integrate health management information system dashboards with both public and private systems and ensure better information systems considering language barriers and diversity in the urban context.

The fourth is to implement community-based primary healthcare in urban and peri-urban areas with seamless referral systems. We need to foster integration of services at the primary healthcare level, ensuring follow-up and adherence to healthcare.

A healthy population is an empowered population. The lighter the disease burden, the better the country's financial health. This election, UHC can be a transformative offering of political parties. Committing to investing in health systems and effectively implementing UHC necessitates political will, substantial investment, and a clear, long-term vision. Establishing a coherent policy pathway to execute the national UHC policy consistently across States is imperative for its success.

Prioritising health for a sustainable future

The health technology industry has seen rapid growth and innovation

Prathap C. Reddy

In a rapidly changing world that is constantly navigating through technological advancements in every aspect of life, in which urbanisation is taking new forms and leading to varied lifestyles, and environmental challenges are glaring, prioritising one's health becomes an act that we cannot ignore, especially if we, as a nation and as a community, are aiming for a sustainable future.

Health and development are interlinked. The health of a population is a fundamental need for economic and social well-being. Thus, the developmental trajectory of a nation hinges significantly on its capacity to furnish top-tier healthcare services to its populace. Doing so enhances productivity, encourages better lifestyles, and creates a more informed and mature labour force, thereby enriching the overall standard of living.

The health tech context

In recent years, the health technology industry has seen rapid growth and innovation. We see a significant increase in the development and use of technology for healthcare purposes, whether it is wearing fitness trackers or using telemedicine. This rise in health technology is not just a trend, but a need arising out of a common purpose of having a sustainable future.

One of the main benefits of incorporating technology into healthcare is its potential to improve access to, and affordability of, healthcare. With the use of mobile apps and remote monitoring devices, individuals can easily track their health metrics and receive personalised recommendations without having to visit a doctor. This not only saves time and money, but also allows for better management of chronic conditions.

Moreover, with technology seamlessly getting integrated into healthcare delivery, we are seeing increased and improved efficiency and accuracy in medical processes too.

One of the most effective ways of addressing the growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and promoting overall health is to invest in preventive care. Early detection and prevention of NCDs can significantly reduce the economic burden on individuals and societies.

Another crucial aspect of health technology is its ability to promote preventive care through data analysis. By collecting real-time data from various sources like fitness trackers, smart scales, and blood glucose monitors, and with the use of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, we can identify patterns that indicate potential health risks. This information can then be used by individuals to make necessary lifestyle changes or it can be shared with healthcare professionals for more targeted treatment plans.

Furthermore, advancements in medical technology have revolutionised diagnostics and treatment for various diseases. For instance, imaging technologies such as MRI and CT scans allow for earlier detection of illnesses with higher precision than ever before. Additionally, robotic surgery techniques have improved surgical outcomes by increasing accuracy while minimising invasiveness.

Healthcare infrastructure

To achieve a healthier and more sustainable future, it is essential to invest in the development of robust healthcare infrastructure. This includes building state-of-the-art hospitals, expanding healthcare networks, and ensuring that healthcare services are accessible to all citizens, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Moreover, healthcare infrastructure must be complemented by skilled human resources and cutting-edge technology. This will ensure that healthcare providers deliver the highest quality of care, ultimately leading to better health outcomes for the population.

Investing in initiatives

Preventive care and public health initiatives should be prioritised to reduce the burden of diseases and promote overall wellness. These initiatives include vaccination drives, disease surveillance, and health education campaigns that target various age groups and communities. By investing in these initiatives, we can empower individuals to make informed choices about their health and well-being, ultimately leading to a more resilient and productive society.

Prioritising good health and well-being is critical for achieving sustainable development goals at both the local and global levels. It not only improves the quality of life for individuals but also contributes to creating more equitable, resilient, and sustainable communities. In an interconnected world, it is essential to recognise the importance of global collaboration in healthcare. With the collective knowledge, resources, and best practices of various nations, we can achieve a sustainable future for all.

Dr. Prathap C. Reddy is Founder-Chairman, Apollo Hospitals Group

Private healthcare needs reform in public interest

The private sector should be transparent and provide rational care at standard rates

Abhay Shukla

Millions of Indians underwent traumatic experiences while seeking treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic. This strongly underlined the urgent need for two complementary streams of change in our healthcare system: strengthening public health services and regulating private healthcare providers. In the Indian context, no initiative for reforming the health sector will be complete without touching upon private healthcare, which accounts for around 70% of healthcare utilisation in the country.

The 2024 Forbes list of billionaires includes 200 Indians. Following manufacturing, the industry that contributes the second largest number of billionaires in India today (36), is healthcare, including pharmaceuticals. This number has increased every year, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Private healthcare in India is allowed to make high profits, because it is inadequately regulated and often charges patients exorbitant rates.

This setting underscores the relevance of policy recommendations contained in the recently published Jan Swasthya Abhiyan's 18-point People's Health Manifesto. It contains a wide range of inter-related policy recommendations covering diverse themes including public health services, the private healthcare sector, pharmaceutical policy, and the right to universal health care. Here, I briefly outline some key measures concerning the private healthcare sector in India.

Transparency, standardisation of rates

Private healthcare providers are perhaps unique among all the commercial services in India, since the rates of their services are generally not transparently available in the public domain. This is linked with the wide spectrum of rates that may be charged for the same procedure or treatment, not only by various hospitals in the same area, but also from different patients within the same hospital. The Clinical Establishments (Central Government) Rules, 2012 specify that all healthcare providers must display their rates and should charge standard rates as determined by the government from time to time. However, 12 years after these legal provisions were enacted, surprisingly they are yet to be implemented.

The Supreme Court has recently intervened in this matter, asking the Union Health Ministry to standardise healthcare rates as per the law. It is high time that transparency of healthcare rates be ensured, and standardisation of rates be implemented in an appropriate manner. This is technically feasible, keeping in view that thousands of private hospitals routinely accept reimbursement at standard rates for practically all common medical procedures, as part of large-scale official programmes such as the Central Government Health Scheme and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana. These measures can be legally ensured when the Clinical Establishment Rules are implemented or when State governments adopt improved Acts of their own, which include similar positive provisions.

It is also necessary to implement standard protocols to check irrational healthcare interventions, which are currently promoted on a wide scale due to commercial considerations. For example, the proportion of caesarean deliveries in India in private hospitals (48%) is three times higher compared to public hospitals (14%). In private hospitals, the share is far in excess of the medically recommended norm for caesarean sections (10-15% of all deliveries). Rationalising treatment practices and curbing excessive medical procedures will not just bring down excessive bills charged by many private hospitals, but also significantly improve healthcare outcomes for patients.

Implement patients' rights

Given huge asymmetries of knowledge and power between patients and hospitals, certain rights are universally accepted to protect patients. These include the right of every patient to receive basic information about their condition and treatment, and the expected costs of care and itemised bills; the right to second opinion, informed consent, confidentiality and choice of provider for obtaining medicines or tests; and ensuring that no hospital should detain the body of a patient on any pretext.

In the Indian context, the National Human Rights Commission formulated a set of patients' rights and responsibilities in 2018. Such a charter was circulated by the Union Health Ministry to all State governments in shorter form in 2019, and then in a more comprehensive form including 20 patients' rights in 2021. However, given the lack of official attention given to these rights until now, the complete Patient Rights Charter (not a diluted version as observed in some hospitals) must be effectively enforced in all healthcare facilities across the country, so that patients and their caregivers can obtain care in a conducive environment. Creating such a secure setting would also help to rebuild much-needed trust between patients and providers.

A private hospital. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Further, given the failure of existing mechanisms like Medical Councils to ensure justice for patients with serious complaints related to private hospitals, it is important that user-friendly grievance redressal systems be operationalised from district level upwards, with multi-stakeholder oversight.

Control commercialisation of colleges

Along with these measures on private healthcare, some complementary steps concerning medical education are mentioned in the manifesto. There is an urgent need to control commercialised private medical colleges, especially mandating that their fees must not be higher than government medical colleges. Further, expansion of medical education must be focused on public colleges rather than commercialised private institutions. The National Medical Commission needs independent, multi-stakeholder review and reform, keeping in view criticisms that this body lacks representation of diverse stakeholders, has excessively centralised decision-making, and tends towards further commercialisation of medical education. The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) needs restructuring, since this tends to place candidates from less privileged backgrounds at a disadvantage, while encroaching on the autonomy of States in determining their own medical admission processes.

These vital measures for reforming private healthcare in public interest should be part of wider processes for developing a public-centred system of universal health care, based on major expansion and strengthening of public services, while engaging regulated private providers as per requirement. Drawing upon successful models such as the healthcare system in Thailand, such a system in India could provide rights-based access to free and quality healthcare to everyone.

Today, all political parties should commit themselves to implementing these transformations, while as citizens we must strongly demand them. This would be a fitting manner to celebrate World Health Day in India in 2024.

Dr Abhay Shukla is a public health specialist and a co-convenor of Jan Swasthya Abhiyan

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 8, 1974

Radiation to sterilise medical products

The first ISOMED radiation plant in India - in fact in South and South-east Asia - has been set up at Trombay as a joint venture of the Department of Atomic Energy and the United Nations Development Programme.

The use of a radiation plant for sterilising medical products came into vogue in 1963, first in the United States when a well-known pharmaceutical company used cotton and other cotton gauze for medical purposes. The United Kingdom later put on stream many well-developed plants. There are four plants in Britain using advanced technology in this field.

One of the features of the Trombay centre is that scientists and technologists have incorporated the latest design and technical expertise in this plant. It went on steam in early January this year much ahead of schedule. The plant has received financial and technical assistance from the UNDP and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Similar plants are contemplated for the southern, western and eastern regions.

Loaded initially with a Cobalt-60 source of 100,000 curies activity, the plant can sterilise about 3,300 cubic metres of locally manufactured medical products annually. It is proposed to expand its capacity tenfold with the built-in capability as demand for the facility increases. The new facility will provide a major impetus to the growth of ancillary industries, especially in the manufacture of plastic medical appliances.

Isomed will also serve as a centre for training scientists, engineers and technicians from other developing countries. Already a beginning has been made with the training of scientists and technologists from Indonesia and the Philippines.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 8, 1924

Humours of broadcasting

London, April 6: Wireless enthusiasts in England, listening to the American broadcasting programmes early on Sunday morning constantly heard a puzzling clicking noise. They afterwards learned that they had been listening to the beating of a man's heart broadcast from Pittsburgh.

From Page One

Traders rue onion exports to the UAE

These exports are being channelled exclusively through the National Cooperative Exports Limited, a government-owned body under the Ministry of Cooperation. Exporters were told that exports were being done on a government-to-government basis, with the importing country allocating quotas to nominated importers. Procurements for such exports are being done through an e-tendering process on the Agribazaar portal.

On the UAE side, the importers identified to receive these shipments are learnt to be private traders and supermarket chains, not government agencies dealing with food security concerns. As is typical for trade deals, local onion suppliers are required to bid for the lowest possible price they can offer; buyers were also expected to be picked on the highest price offered, but exporters say that is not the case here.

The Horticulture Produce Exporters' Association has been seeking clarity on the process for permitting exports and setting the price for shipments. In an email to NCEL on March 25, it flagged concerns that the prices at which onions are being sold abroad are lower than international prices, which were about $1,450 a tonne at the time. The mail, which was also marked to the Commerce and Consumer Affairs Ministries, noted that buyers were not government bodies but government-nominated firms.

Queries sent by *The Hindu* over the past week to the Ministries of Commerce, Consumer Affairs, and Cooperation on the modalities for determining the export price, and identifying the exporters and importers under this window, went unanswered. An Agriculture Ministry source said it was only concerned with providing crop estimates.

PM, Mamata trade barbs over attack on NIA team

Trinamool leaders have been alleging that the NIA investigation in the Bhupatinagar blast of 2022 was an attempt to target its party leaders before the Lok Sabha election.

An NIA official had sustained injuries when local people attacked an agency team at Bhupatinagar on Saturday. The NIA had arrested two accused in the Bhupatinagar blast case during its search. Residents allegedly tried to obstruct the NIA team.

Amidst the political war of words, the NIA issued a press statement saying that there was "no *mala fide* intent in action in Bhupatinagar blast case", claiming that the attack on its team was "unprovoked". The agency said that the entire controversy was unfortunate.

"NIA made it clear that its actions were *bona fide*, lawful and legally mandated, as part of its ongoing investigation into the heinous crime related to fabrication of crude bombs, leading to an explosion that killed three persons in Naruabila village, PS Bhupatinagar, district Purba Medinipur in West Bengal," the NIA statement said.

The NIA had taken over the investigation in the case on June 6, 2023.

Minutes after the NIA press statement, Trinamool leader Abhishek Banerjee took to social media and urged the NIA to clarify whether "Jitendra Tiwari of BJP met with your SP at his residence in Kolkata on the 26th March, while the MCC [Model Code of Conduct] was in effect? Additionally, we have information suggesting he arrived with a parcel and left empty-handed after 52 minutes."

Meanwhile, the police have registered a case of outraging the modesty of women against NIA officials, in connection with the scuffle with local people on Saturday.

MSMEs pursue GST reforms with candidates

"The rate was initially 18% and after a lot of representations, it was reduced to 12%. It should be either 5% or nil," R. Ramamurthy, former president of the Coimbatore District Small Industries Association, said.

While introducing GST, the Union government said it would reduce the rates when the GST revenue crossed ₹1 lakh crore. However, there is no indication of such a move, V. Thirugnanam, president of the Association, said.

B. Kandavel, organising secretary of the Federation of Tamil Nadu Powerlooms Associations, said they had submitted a memorandum to the BJP on the GST refund pending for looms weaving viscose fabric. Almost 2,000 units in the western districts of Tamil Nadu have to get nearly ₹1,200 crore refund. Close to 500 units have closed down business because of the pending refund. Mr. Kandavel said that some of the larger textile industries in northern India have gone to the court over this issue.

In Ludhiana, auto component units pay 28% tax for some of the components. For those supplying to the spares market, the cost goes up as they cannot take input tax credit and they need to compete with units that are not registered with GST. So there is no transparency in business and many units face liquidity issues. This has been represented to the local candidates fielded by parties, Upkar Singh Ahuja, president, Chamber of Industrial and Commercial Undertakings, said.

K.E. Raghunanthan, chairman of the Association of Indian Entrepreneurs, said political parties should give priority to MSMEs in their election manifestos.

INDIA bloc is anti-*Sanatana* and corrupt, says Modi at Bihar rally

PM targets RJD, says people of the State had spent a long time under 'jungle raj'; he also attacks Congress chief Kharge over his remarks on Article 370; later, he launches the BJP's election campaign in Madhya Pradesh with a roadshow in Jabalpur

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA/BHOPAL

In his second public meeting in Bihar after Jamui, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday took a dig at the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), reiterating that the Congress manifesto "had the imprint of the Muslim League".

At a rally in Nawada, he called the bloc "anti-*Sanatana*" and "corrupt". He also did not miss the opportunity to target the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) by reminding people of "jungle raj". Mr. Modi was seeking votes in support of BJP candidate Vivek Thakur. Nawada is one of the four constituencies of Bihar that will go to the polls on April 19.

"Nawada has always given love and blessings to the BJP and NDA," Mr. Modi said. While asserting that the entire country was saying "*Phir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar*", he stressed eradication of poverty from the country.

"The people of Bihar and Nawada have spent a long time in the era of jungle raj. There was a time in Bihar when our sisters and daughters were scared of walking on the roads. Due to the efforts of Nitish Kumar*ji* and Sushil Kumar Modi, Bihar came out of jungle raj," Mr. Modi said.

Mega alliance: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary and LJP (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan in Nawada on Sunday. PTI

Apart from Mr. Kumar, several other leaders of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) were present on stage. "Modi's guarantee is troubling the leaders of Congress, the RJD and INDIA bloc. They say there should be a ban on Modi's guarantee because it is illegal. Modi gives guarantee because the intention is right. INDIA leaders consider themselves as the permanent rulers of India," Mr. Modi said.

Article 370

Attacking Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge over his remarks on dilution of Article 370, Mr. Modi said he had given the guarantee to withdraw Article 370 and implemented the Constitution of Babasaheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar in Jammu and Kashmir. "I was ashamed after listening to the Congress national president who asked why I talked about Article 370 in Rajasthan. Kashmir is ours and many jawans from Bihar and Rajasthan have sacrificed their lives to protect Kashmir," Mr. Modi said.

He said he had given a guarantee to construct a Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and now it had been fulfilled. The Congress and the RJD tried to stop its construction for many years, he said.

"INDIA bloc is a place of corrupt people and 'anti-national hate force'. Look at their statement, they talk about eradicating *Sanatana Dharma*, they talk about one more division of the country. The manifesto which was released by Congress two days ago has the imprint of the Muslim League. The Congress has released an appeasement letter not manifesto," he charged.

Referring to the wheat crisis in Pakistan, Mr. Modi said, "*Jo log India ko anakh dekhate the, wo abb antte ke liye bhatak rahe hai* [Those used to stare at India are now searching for flour]."

Triangular contest

Although there is a direct fight between the NDA and the RJD-led grand alliance in Nawada, the contest may be triangular. Apart from Mr. Thakur and RJD's Shravan Kushwaha, Independent candidate Vinod Yadav is also in the fray. He is the brother of *Bahubali* (strongman) leader Rajballabh Yadav.

Later on Sunday, Mr. Modi launched the BJP's election campaign in Madhya Pradesh with a roadshow in Jabalpur, which goes to the polls in the first phase on April 19. This was the Prime Minister's first visit to the State after the announcement of election. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, State Minister Rakesh Singh, and BJP's Jabalpur candidate Ashish Dubey were present.

Taking to social media platform X, Mr. Modi said the BJP governments had worked for a better infrastructure and road connectivity in the region. "Today the roadshow in Jabalpur was amazing! The enthusiasm and passion of my family members here says we are going to get the blessings for a third term. Along with better infrastructure and roads, we have done unprecedented work in every field here," Mr. Modi wrote. He also hit out at the Congress and alleged that the people of Jabalpur had "long seen the anti-people politics" of the Opposition party.

BJP criticises Kharge's remarks on Article 370

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday said the Congress had "lost the moral right to remain a political party" following party chief Mallikarjun Kharge's remarks on the scrapping of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said in Rajasthan as to what difference does it make here with the removal of Article 370. If a party says what difference does it make in other States with the integration of Kashmir, it's clear that you [Congress] have no respect for the oath taken by everyone for the unity and integrity of the country," BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said.

He said the Congress, "which has almost lost the status or the right to be a national party, has now also lost the right to be even a political party from a moral point of view". The Congress can now call itself a "conglomeration of the regional forces", he added.

Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday termed Mr. Kharge's remarks shameful. He said Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India and that every State and citizen had a right over it just as the people of Jammu and Kashmir had a right over the rest of the country.

BJP holds protest, puts up exhibition on AAP's 'graft'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Sunday organised a protest at Connaught Place, less than a kilometre away from Jantar Mantar, where the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was holding a hunger strike.

The party demanded the resignation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal after his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate. Mr. Kejriwal is currently in judicial custody till April 15 and is lodged in Tihar Jail. The AAP has said that he will continue as the Chief Minister of Delhi even from behind bars.

At the busy market, the BJP put up an exhibition of "corruption" at which an alleged model of the renovated Chief Minister's bungalow in Civil Lines was put on display, with the BJP calling the public to see for themselves the opulence of the residence, which they have termed *Sheeshmahal*, allegedly built with public funds during the pandemic.

BJP workers during a protest against Kejriwal in which an alleged model of renovated CM's bungalow is displayed. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

A selfie point with the name '*Sharab se Sheeshmahal tak*' was also set up at the protest venue with liquor bottle-shaped cutouts of AAP leaders accused in the alleged excise policy scam on display.

'Ask for forgiveness'

Addressing the gathering, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said, "We have organised this protest to show the people of Delhi how the AAP made money through the Delhi liquor policy that is under investigation and how Mr. Kejriwal, who said that he was an *aam aadmi* (common man) and would not take a government bungalow, built such a luxurious house for himself."

He added that when people came to Delhi, they visited the Qutub Minar, Red Fort, Akshardham Mandir and other places of interest, but now they could come see the "model of the Taj Mahal of corruption in the form of the Chief Minister's new house".

Mr. Sachdeva said the AAP should not be organising a hunger protest but should be asking for forgiveness from the people of Delhi for indulging in corruption.

Money trail in liquor scam leads back to BJP, says AAP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

AAP leader and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh on Sunday dared Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena to start an investigation into the BJP's liquor scam, given that the saffron party had taken ₹60 crore in the form of electoral bonds from an accused in the Delhi liquor policy scam case allegedly in exchange for bail and naming Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

"Fifty thousand pages and 456 witnesses are placed by ED. But only four witnesses have taken Mr. Kejriwal's name and that too, these people have taken his name after being forced. The BJP is the most corrupt party and the money trail in the scam that the Enforcement Directorate is investigating leads right back to the BJP," he said.

Mr. Singh was speaking at a day-long fast at Jantar Mantar to protest against the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. Similar protests were held in other States and by Indians across the globe. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and several Ministers in the AAP-ruled State held a collective fast at freedom fighter Bhagat Singh's village Khatkar Kalan.

AAP MP Sanjay Singh with Atishi and party leaders during the day-long fast at Jantar Mantar on Sunday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Mr. Singh said a party that was confident of winning an election and was giving the slogan "400 *paar* " (above 400) would not be getting two Chief Ministers (Mr. Kejriwal and Hemant Soren) arrested by Central agencies and sending Income Tax notices to the Congress and getting their accounts sealed. "This means that the BJP is not winning, they are afraid that they are not coming back to Delhi in 2024," he said.

Addressing the gathering, senior AAP leader Atishi said, "I would like to salute the leaders of the AAP today. Leaders of other parties have bowed down to the BJP as soon as they heard the words CBI, ED, and joined the BJP. But our leaders have not broken, we should not feel sad that our leaders are in jail but be proud that they stood up to the BJP." She told party workers to work hard and reward the jailed leaders' struggle by getting the vote of the people and putting the final nail in the BJP's coffin.

Will rejoin BJP in 15 days: Eknath Khadse

Shoumojit Banerjee
PUNE

Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) leader Eknath Khadse on Sunday officially confirmed that he would be returning to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) within the next fortnight.

However, Mr. Khadse's daughter, Rohini Khadse, said she would remain with the NCP (SP). Ms. Rohini was the head of the women's wing of the Sharad Pawar-led NCP.

Once a stalwart BJP leader who was close to the late Gopinath Munde, Mr. Khadse was in the reckoning for the post of Chief Minister in Maharashtra following the BJP's win in the 2014 Assembly election.

Eknath Khadse

However, he was edged out in favour of his intra-party rival Devendra Fadnavis, who served as Chief Minister (2014-19) and then took on the role of Deputy Chief Minister.

Over the past few days, speculation is rife that Mr. Khadse would return to his original party.

"I recently met party president J.P. Nadda and Union Minister Amit Shah and held discussions with them regarding my entry into the party. I have expressed a wish that I would like to join the BJP within the next 15 days," Mr. Khadse told presspersons in his stronghold Muktainagar in Jalgaon district.

Mr. Khadse was the Leader of the Opposition in the State Legislative Assembly prior to the 2014 Maharashtra Assembly election.

Meanwhile, downplaying his differences with Mr. Fadnavis, Mr. Khadse said the bitterness in their relationship had mellowed over the years.

Commenting on Mr. Khadse's return, Maharashtra State BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule said Mr. Fadnavis had never opposed Mr. Khadse.

India can defend its border, says Adityanath

The Hindu Bureau
JAIPUR

Affirming that India was capable of defending its borders, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said the BJP government at the Centre had dealt with all internal and external security threats to safeguard the citizens. Mr. Adityanath said no one could shelter terrorists now without facing consequences.

Mr. Adityanath made the remarks while addressing election rallies in support of the BJP's candidates in Bharatpur, Daus and Sikar districts of Rajasthan.

He said those who sheltered terrorists in the past would not dare say anything against India now for fear of "air strike".

The senior BJP leader was referring to a report carried by British daily *The Guardian* claiming that the Indian intelligence agencies were involved in targeted killings across the border in Pakistan.

ELECTIONS 2024

'Release list of people who joined BJP'

Madhya Pradesh Congress on Sunday dared the ruling BJP to release the list of 2.58 lakh people, most of them from the grand old party, who joined the saffron outfit as claimed by its leaders.

Former Minister Narottam Mishra had on Saturday claimed that more than 2.58 lakh people, including 1.26 lakh on April 6 alone, had joined the saffron party in the State in the past three months, and most of them were from the Congress.

State Congress chief Jitu Patwari said the BJP had only released the list of prominent leaders who joined their party to the media, which included 336 leaders. "I challenge them, will the BJP release the list of 2.58 lakh workers who have joined their party?" he said, adding that the BJP was misleading people. PTI

Madhya Pradesh Congress President Jitu Patwari speaks in Bhopal in this file photo.

EC uses social media to nudge electors to vote

The Election Commission has launched a variety of campaigns across social media platforms to nudge young and urban voters to cast their ballot in the Lok Sabha election.

The poll body has also initiated a campaign urging people to first verify then amplify what they get on social media related to elections. The campaign seeks to bust fake news and urge people to exercise caution and diligence before sharing information on social media.

According to the poll body, it is nudging young and first-time voters through 'Turning 18' campaign, urging them to come to the polling station to vote. 'You are the One' campaign seeks to recognise importance of different stakeholders in the election process. PTI

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi says I will finish corruption, but the INDI alliance leaders say save the corrupt people. That is their working style

J.P. NADDA
BJP president

BJP's Odisha unit V-P resigns, joins the BJD

In a jolt to the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, the party's Odisha unit vice-president Lekhasri Samantasinghar on Sunday resigned from the saffron party and joined the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) ahead of the Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections. PTI

"The people are now tired of the Prime Minister's lies. After June 4, he will have to go on long leave. This is the guarantee of the people of India

JAIRAM RAMESH
Congress leader

Over 73,000 applications received on Suvidha: EC

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Sunday said its Suvidha portal has received over 73,000 applications since the Lok Sabha election was announced, seeking permission for various campaign-related activities.

The applications submitted by parties and candidates include requests for booking rally grounds, opening temporary party offices and operating video publicity vans, the EC said. More than 44,600 requests have been approved with the first in, first out principle ensuring a level playing field for parties and candidates, it said.

'Nearly 15% rejected'

Of the total requests received, nearly 11,200 or 15% were rejected, and 10,819 applications were cancelled as they were invalid or duplicate, the data released by the commission showed.

The highest number of requests was received from Tamil Nadu (23,239), followed by West Bengal (11,976) and Madhya Pradesh (10,636).

The least number have been received from Chandigarh (17), Lakshadweep (18) and Manipur (20), the poll authority said.

The Suvidha portal caters to permissions for organising rallies, booking venues, opening temporary party offices, door-to-door canvassing, video vans, use of helicopters and helipads, obtaining vehicle permits and distributing pamphlets.

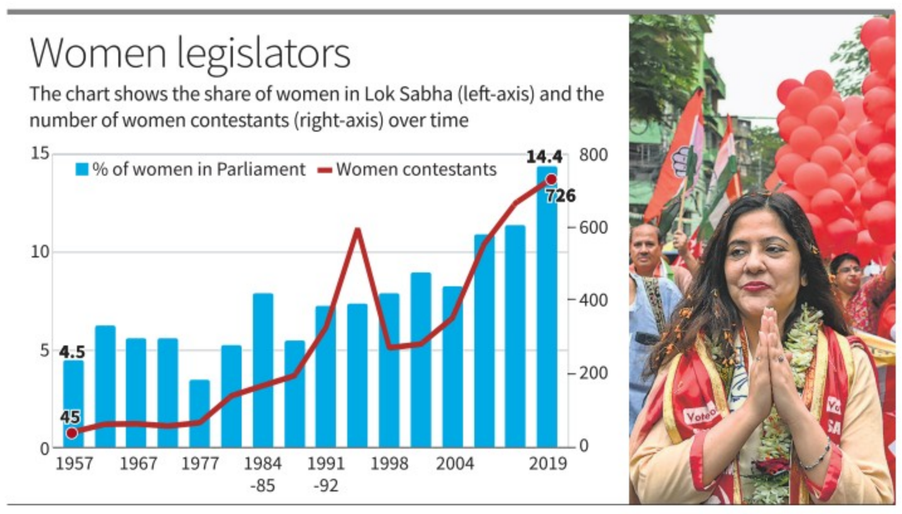
The data available on the portal serve as a valuable resource for scrutinising election expenditures, contributing to greater accountability and integrity in the electoral process, the poll body said.

EC data show number of women candidates grew 16-fold from 1957 to 2019

Figures show number of women candidates has never crossed 1,000; flagging lack of political will, Centre for Social Research director says parties give fewer opportunities, harder seats to women

NUMBER THEORY

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI



In 1957, there were just 45 women candidates contesting the Lok Sabha election; by 2019, this figure had risen to 726, Election Commission data show. The percentage of women in Parliament has increased from 4.5% in 1957 to 14.4% in 2019. The number of male candidates, on the other hand, has grown from 1,474 in 1957 to 7,322 in 2019.

This means that the number of men contesting has multiplied five times; for women, the growth has been 16-fold.

In 1957, a mere 2.9% of candidates were women; in 2019, they made up around 9% of the total pool of candidates. However, the number of women candidates has never yet crossed 1,000.

Gender-wise data are not available for the first Lok Sabha election in 1952.

A perusal of the EC data shows that in the second Lok Sabha election in 1957, of the 45 women candidates in the fray, 22 won, indicating a 48.88% success rate. That has declined consistently ever since; in 2019, women's success rate was just 10.74%, as only 78 of the 726 women candidates won their seats.

In the case of male candidates, their winning percentage dropped from 31.7% in 1957 to just 6.4% in 2019. This is not, however, a marker for any trends in the winnability of men and women; it simply reflects the fact that the number of candidates of both sexes has grown even as the number of seats in the Lok Sabha remained the same, experts note.

"This just shows the maturing of the Indian democracy and the fact that more and more women are entering the fray," says political analyst Tara Krishnaswamy, co-founder of the NGO Political Shakti.

On the huge gap between the numbers of women and men candidates, experts say that women have much fewer opportunities to contest. "The winnability of women is higher, but there is a lack of will among parties to give them opportunities to contest," says Ranjana Kumari, women's rights activist and the director of the Centre for Social Research. Even when they do, she says, "parties generally give more difficult seats to women. They may be put up against strong candidates or those who can be categorised as having more muscle and money power."

There is thus no level playing field, she says.

PDP to contest all 3 Lok Sabha seats in the Kashmir Valley

Party president Mehbooba Mufti to contest from Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on Sunday announced it will field candidates from all three Lok Sabha seats in the Kashmir Valley, with party president Mehbooba Mufti contesting south Kashmir's Anantnag-Rajouri seat.

PDP youth president Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra and former Rajya Sabha member Fayaz Ahmad Mir will contest central Kashmir's Srinagar and north Kashmir's Baramulla seats, respectively.

"There is a need for democratic resistance. People should fearlessly voice their grievances and stand united against oppression. I am steadfast on the commitment to representing the aspirations of my people, despite facing personal and political targeting," Ms. Mufti said.

The PDP leaders' entry into the Valley's electoral battlefield reflects the failure of the INDIA bloc and the J&K-level People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration to stitch together a pre-poll alliance due to differences over seat sharing.

However, Ms. Mufti said her party had decided to offer "unconditional support for the Congress for two seats in Jammu".

"Our support to the Congress is unconditional, without a rider for their support to us, because we believe that unity is paramount in the fight for securing the democratic and constitutional ethos of our country," Ms. Mufti said.

She reiterated that J&K was facing a relentless onslaught on identity, rights, and dignity, "especially in the past five years under the BJP". "Voters need to have a unified electoral response across all sections of society and geography in Jammu and Kashmir. Voters should send fearless representatives to Parliament to echo the sentiments and pains of the region on a national platform," Ms. Mufti said.

The Anantnag-Rajouri seat is likely to see J&K's main electoral battle, with National Conference's Mian Altaf, Democratic Progressive Azad Party's (DAPA) Ghulam Nabi Azad, and J&K Apni Party's Zaffar Manhas already in the fray. The BJP is yet to field its candidates from the Valley's three seats.

Azad brews a storm in a 'teapot', amid worries of vote split in Nagina

Sobhana K. Nair
NAGINA (UTTAR PRADESH)

Amid the chants of "*Saari Party Dekh Li, Ab Ki Baar Ketli* [We have tested all parties, now it is teapot's turn]" and drumbeats, a crowd of men holding afloat huge aluminium teapots tied to shafts, make their way through narrow mud lanes into the residential colony behind the Haldaur market in the Nagina Lok Sabha constituency of Uttar Pradesh. At the head of the crowd is Chandrashekhar Azad, national president of the Azad Samaj Party (Kanshiram), a four-year-old political outfit, that is fighting its first Lok Sabha election.

Ketli or teapot is their election symbol. With polling just 10 days away, the campaign fever is rising. *The Hindu* met Mr. Azad on Saturday as he went door-to-door, asking for votes. Just an hour earlier, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader and Mayawati's heir apparent Akash Anand, in his debut campaign speech, addressed a modest crowd just 30 km away. Mr. Anand does not name Mr. Azad, but warns the crowd not to be "misled" by the "messiah" and not to fall for his rescue act. The reference is not lost on them.

New challenger: Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Azad addressing the media in Bijnor on Saturday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

The two frames capture the dilemma of the voters of Nagina.

The constituency, formed in 2008 after the last round of delimitation, had elected Samajwadi Party, BJP and BSP candidates. The only time a BJP candidate won here was in 2014 – when both the BSP and the SP polled nearly equal number of votes. In 2019, when the two Uttar Pradesh regional parties joined hands, the BSP, which got the seat, landed an easy victory. The majority of the electorate here are Muslims and Dalits – who now find their loyalties torn between three candidates – the SP's Manoj Kumar, the BSP's Surender Pal Singh and Mr. Azad – and this gives the BJP an edge.

The Azad Samaj Party members concede that the three-way divide is not helpful. A close aide of Mr. Azad says the party is prepared for the long haul of "*sangarsh*" or "struggle".

'Rise of new politics'

Unencumbered by realism of his pragmatic colleagues, Mr. Azad talks about "*nayi rajniti ka uday* [rise of new politics]". "We will get 70% votes here," he says. His team members lament that had the Samajwadi Party agreed to leave the seat for him, he would have easily walked away with victory. His talks with the SP failed, when Jayant Chaudhary, who was advocating for a berth for him, joined hands with the BJP. "On one end they claim this is the last election and that the BJP will amend the Constitution beyond recognition. Yet, they give in to their insecurities," Mr. Azad said. But then as an afterthought, he shrugs and adds, "In democracy, no one gives way to you, you have to carve your own path."

With Mr. Chaudhary now with the BJP, Mr. Azad is also battling the charge that he too has covert support from the party since he was granted Y-category security by the State. He argues against the narrative, claiming that he alone has faced the bullets. He is equally dismissive of criticism by Mr. Anand. "He was born with a silver spoon, he is yet to learn a lot from me," he says.

Mr. Azad was seen by many as the poster boy of Dalit politics, who, they hope, will fill the vacuum left behind by the BSP, whose presence in the Assembly and Parliament has been depleting.

But standing alone, Mr. Azad has little chance to fulfil the destiny that many predict for him, at least in this election.

Going for broke in Udhampur, the big border constituency in J&K

Vijaita Singh
KATHUA

Kanta Andotra knows that she has a tough task. The former MLA is canvassing for votes from village to village on behalf of her husband, Choudhary Lal Singh, a two-time MP from Udhampur.

Mr. Choudhary, the Congress candidate, has been fielded against the BJP's Jitendra Singh, who won the previous Lok Sabha elections with a huge margin.

During the 2014 Lok Sabha election, Mr. Choudhary, who had a brief stint with the BJP and was a Minister in the then BJP-People's Democratic Party (PDP) government, had helped Mr. Singh in his campaign. The so far one-sided contest has turned interesting with the entry of Mr. Choudhary.

"Do you want a candidate to whom you can reach through a call even in the dead of the night or someone who never steps foot in the area? Do you want a local representative or an outsider? Our issues are *raasta* and *naali* [road and drainage], there are no jobs for the youth, pension for widows and Anganwadi workers have stopped," Ms. Andotra says to a group at Kootah in Kathua.

Facing off: Congress candidate Choudhary Lal Singh addressing a public meeting at Hiranagar in Kathua district on April 1. ANI

Udhampur goes to the polls on April 19 and, geographically, is one of the largest Lok Sabha constituencies in the country. It comprises Doda, Ramban, Kathua, Kishtwar and Udhampur districts, and has a 60% Hindu and 40% Muslim population.

After Mr. Choudhary quit the BJP to protest the government's decision to revoke Article 370 in J&K, the CBI registered a case of land grab against an educational trust run by his family. In 2019, he floated his own party and finished fourth in the Lok Sabha election. He was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in November 2023 in a money laundering case.

"At that time, he did not have the support of the Congress. It was a new party and we did not have enough resources. Now, we have the organisational backing," Ms. Andotra said.

'Busy MP'

Some local people say that Mr. Singh had been an "absent MP." Others say that his job in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) keeps him busy.

Asha Devi, alias Baby, a BJP worker, has been campaigning for Mr. Singh in villages in Kathua and Hiranagar, which share a border with Pakistan. "How can you expect a person who holds such a key position in the PMO to be available here all the time? While being in Delhi, he ensures that he gets good infrastructure projects for us. Modi*ji* is an incarnation of God, he made the Ram Mandir," Ms. Baby says.

"The Ram Mandir was made with our money, all of us contributed. But there is no need to seek votes in Ram's name. Our issue is unemployment, young men do not have jobs. Another big issue is alcohol and drugs," Romesh Chandra, a former head of Swal village, says.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are all set to campaign for Mr. Singh this week. "If Mr. Singh was winning smoothly, what was the need for Yogi*ji* and Modi*ji* to campaign here?" a Congress worker asked.

The Democratic Progressive Azad Party of Ghulam Nabi Azad has also fielded a candidate, G.M Saroori. "He never criticises the BJP. We will not vote for him, he is the B-team of the BJP. The BJP gave tribal reservation to *pahadis* in J&K. They snatched our rights," Zakir Hussain, a Gujjar from Kootah, said.

INBRIEF

Gangu Ramsay of iconic Ramsay Brothers dies at 83

Cinematographer-filmmaker Gangu Ramsay, one of the seven Ramsay Brothers known for cult horror films such as *Purani Haveli* and *Tehkhana*, died at a hospital in Mumbai on Sunday morning, his family said. He was 83. According to the family, Gangu Ramsay had been battling health issues for the past month. He is survived by daughter Geeta Ramsay and son Chander Ramsay. Under the Ramsay Brothers banner, established by patriarch FU Ramsay, Gangu Ramsay lent his creative vision to over 50 iconic films, including *Veerana*, *Purana Mandir*, *Bandh Darwaza*, *Do Gaz Zameen Ke Neeche*, and *Khoj* starring Rishi Kapoor. PTI

Vistara cancels 1,000 flights in April to 'stabilise operations'

Vistara has said that it has cancelled almost 1,000 flights for April in order to ensure stability in its operations, which saw a massive disruption last week over hectic rosters for pilots and unrest among a section of cockpit crew over pay cuts. "We are carefully scaling back our operations by around 25 to 30 flights per day, that is, roughly 10% of the capacity we were operating," a Vistara spokesperson said in a statement. The move will provide a much-needed buffer to the airline in pilot rosters. The airline said the cancellations will mostly affect domestic flights and have been implemented much ahead of time to minimise inconvenience to passengers. "All the affected passengers have already been re-accommodated on other flights," the airline added.

Akhilesh Yadav seeks justice for Mukhtar Ansari's family

Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday visited the family of deceased mafia-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari at his ancestral house in Mohammadabad town and offered condolences. Mr. Yadav questioned the circumstances under which the former five-time MLA died. "Mukhtar Ansari himself said he was being poisoned and that is what has come to light. We hope that the government will bring out the truth and the family will get justice. Ever since the BJP government has come to power, trust in institutions has decreased," he said.

ED uses fridge, smart TV bills as evidence against Soren

Invoices of a refrigerator and smart TV are among the evidence the Enforcement Directorate (ED) used to support its claim that Jharkhand's former Chief Minister Hemant Soren acquired 8.86 acres of land worth more than ₹31 crore illegally. The agency obtained these receipts from two Ranchi-based dealers and attached those to its chargesheet filed against the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha leader and four others. According to the ED, the two gadgets were purchased in the name of the family members of one Santosh Munda who told the agency that he has been "residing as a caretaker of the property of Hemant Soren on the said land for 14 to 15 years". PTI

'Sri Lankan PM Sirima's call to Indira Gandhi in 1974 saved the Katchatheevu talks from getting derailed'

T. Ramakrishnan
CHENNAI

A telephone call from Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Sirima R.D. Bandaranaike to her Indian counterpart, Indira Gandhi, in January 1974 may perhaps be considered to have saved the bilateral negotiations on the contentious Katchatheevu islet issue from getting derailed.

The issue has acquired prominence ahead of the Lok Sabha election, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 31 blaming the Congress for the "ceding" of the islet to Sri Lanka.

Recounting how the negotiations went over the years, W.T. Jayasinghe, who was the Foreign Secretary of Sri Lanka from 1972-89, in his book *Kachchativu: And the Maritime Boundary of Sri Lanka* (published by Stamford Lake, Sri Lanka, 2003), mentioned that when Bandaranaike arrived in New Delhi on January 22 for "summit and official" level discussions, Sri Lanka's sovereignty over Katchatheevu was "no longer an issue". The neighbour's case had been "established through discussion, documentation and correspondence". What was required to be thrashed out was the apportioning of the historic waters in the Palk Strait and Palk Bay, especially the extent of the territorial sea on the west of the islet.

Islet debate: The Katchatheevu issue has acquired prominence ahead of the Lok Sabha election. L. BALACHANDAR

The visiting Prime Minister was in India till January 30. She was one of the guests of honour at the Republic Day celebrations on January 26 along with the now-disintegrated Yugoslavia's President Josip Tito. Though Bandaranaike and Indira Gandhi had several meetings, exchanging views on several international developments, their one-to-one talks "however, centred around" Katchatheevu and the status of 1.5 lakh persons of Indian origin who had remained stateless.

Not a swift solution

As regards the stateless people, an understanding was reached between the two leaders to absorb them in equal numbers and letters were exchanged between them on January 27.

But, Katchatheevu did not prove to be that swift matter.

The 1921 fishery line, which was drawn up when the British ruled both India and Sri Lanka, had provided for, in the words of India's then External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh, "about three or three and a half miles" west of Katchatheevu. It was in 1921 that the issue of ownership over the islet had also cropped up.

Pointing out that Sri Lanka was "prepared to go back from her version of the median line (7 nautical miles from Katchatheevu to 3.5 nautical miles) as a quid pro quo" to India to withdraw its claim over the islet, Jayasinghe wrote that his Indian counterpart, Kewal Singh, suggested a belt of sea in the form of a semicircle with a radius of half a [nautical] mile as the maritime boundary. This was rejected by the other side as it "would have amounted to no more than a token recognition of Sri Lanka's sovereignty" over the islet.

It was at this stage that Bandaranaike wrote a letter to Indira Gandhi, offering the withdrawal of 1.5 nautical miles from her country's position. "There was no immediate response" from her counterpart. Jayasinghe had suggested to his Prime Minister to seek a one-to-one discussion with Indira Gandhi, as, he observed, "the entire negotiations were now in jeopardy over this issue". The visiting Prime Minister made a phone call to Indira Gandhi, who, in turn, invited her to her residence.

Jayasinghe, who accompanied Bandaranaike, stated that the Indian Prime Minister saw them in the rear verandah of the residence. "It was a most informal meeting," he recalled.

Broaching the subject again, Bandaranaike told her counterpart that a territorial sea of half a mile would "gravely impede" efficient utilisation of the islet and suggested a minimum of two nautical miles. The response of Indira Gandhi was that it would be "difficult to carry such a package" with the Tamil Nadu government, the Sri Lankan diplomat recorded in his book.

Eventually, the two leaders agreed on drawing the boundary one nautical mile west of Katchatheevu. However, the formal signing of the agreement took place five months later.

'Unnecessarily complex' GST needs urgent reform: Kelkar

Chairman of 13th Finance Commission attributes frauds in indirect tax regime to high GST rates; moots switch to single 12% rate; says GST Council Secretariat must not be attached to Union govt.

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

A key architect of India's tax reforms and Chairman of the 13th Finance Commission, Vijay Kelkar has called upon the country's next government to undertake urgent reforms in the "unnecessarily complex" Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime.

Mr. Kelkar has also mooted the creation of an independent secretariat for the GST Council, the apex decision-making body for the indirect tax rolled out in July 2017, as the current arrangement of the Union government driving the secretariat may be considered problematic by the States.

He termed the simplification of the GST structure as a "critically important fiscal reform" to take the GST regime to its most natural destination.

"The genesis of the current GST frauds lies in the very structure of the GST rates, as high rates of GST make it lucrative for the fraudsters to evade taxes," he stressed after receiving the TIOL Fiscal Award on Saturday. Instead, he suggested that a single GST rate of 12%, with revenues shared equally with all the tiers of the government and Union Territories, be introduced at the earliest.

Equitable distribution: Vijay Kelkar said that the GST revenues should be shared with the third tier of the government.

"In most of the developed and emerging market economies as well, there is a policy of single GST or VAT [Value Added Tax] rate on goods and services. The countries having a single rate and simple GST or VAT laws have been successful in optimising tax revenue and minimising tax disputes," the former Finance Secretary noted. Of countries with GST or VAT systems, 80% have opted for a single tax rate.

Stating that a single GST rate is "an unmet goal" in India, he recalled that a single rate of 12% had been recommended by the 13th Finance Commission "very early on in the GST debate". It would simplify the structure, quell almost all classification issues, and help promote manufacturing and exports, he said.

"The revolutionary reform of introduction of a single GST rate, with additional non-VAT-able taxes such as carbon taxes on a few demerit goods like hydrocarbons, is now essential," Mr. Kelkar asserted.

While the Union Finance Ministry providing support to the GST Council during its formative decade is "understandable", Mr. Kelkar cautioned that it is possible that State governments may not always feel that the present administrative arrangement is neutral in terms of its support or the advice it offers to the GST Council.

He also pleaded for GST revenues to be shared with the third tier of the government.

"Equitable sharing of the GST with the third tier will go a long way in strengthening the fiscal base of our urban governments and also to deepen democracy and governance at the grassroot level," Mr. Kelkar said.

"To enable this, we will require a Constitutional amendment, firstly to create the consolidated fund for the third tier of government; and secondly, GST reforms, where GST will be shared equitably by the Centre, State, and local governments such as municipal corporations," he underlined. Such an arrangement, he noted, would also bolster the quality of governance as citizens' demand for quality public goods will grow louder.

Singh moots market discipline for fiscal accountability

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

N. K. Singh

Governments around the world seldom comply with fiscal rules and some sort of market discipline needs to be considered to ensure some accountability for countries, 15th Finance Commission chief N.K. Singh indicated, terming these as important issues that need to be mulled over globally and in India.

"Normally, compliance to fiscal rules is far from encouraging. Can we integrate market discipline in the design of fiscal rules? Ultimately, the important issue is that of accountability. Can market discipline embedded in sovereign spreads serve as an accountability mechanism?" Mr. Singh noted.

Speaking late on Saturday after he was presented the TIOL Fiscal Heritage Award by former President Ram Nath Kovind, Mr. Singh emphasised the need to combine fiscal prudence with growth.

At the same time, he signalled that debt raised for infrastructure investments that facilitate long term growth may be treated differently instead of a one-size-fits-all approach to determine fiscal deficit levels. He also wondered if fiscal norms should have greater thresholds for the additional financing needs of countries to make the transition to renewable energy.

"Does the use of Artificial Intelligence or AI offer technological breakthroughs for real time data which would make cyclically adjusted deficits possible in a time frame necessary for the recalibration of policies? How would quality of expenditure and expenditure outcomes impact the fixation of fiscal norms?" he asked.

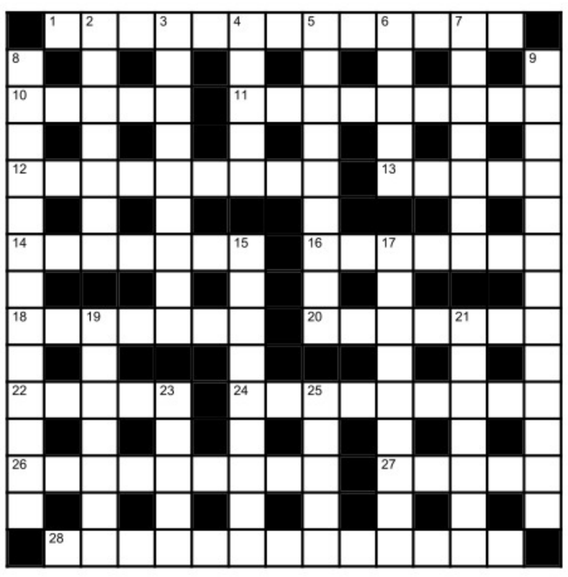
He also stressed that fiscal deficits cannot be discussed without considering revenue and revenue buoyancy. "There is a symbiotic relationship to taxes, tax reform and enhanced rates of economic growth," Mr. Singh remarked.

TH CROSSWORD + 14143

(set by Arden)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Clueless about auto foundries? (3,3,2,5)
10 Feast well, both undress and stand (5)
11 Appears to back public transport, so hurry up (4,5)
12 In other words: Ctrl+Esc, school makes major changes (9)
13 Take off - after seconds it's gone! (5)
14 Correct regions that show Italian address (7)
16 What a tyrant will do by stripping copy printer? (7)
18 Sit in grass, relaxed (7)
20 Instrument reportedly for commutation of death penalty (7)
22 Capital punishment and rigorous imprisonment, say for all leaders (5)
24 Some amount of work at both ends - we accept the whole thing was a scandal (9)
26 Oddly feel noun before a subject adds spice (9)
27 Had vanquished sans the British (5)
28 Chances that I turn off in opposite way (13)

Down

2 Emergency power arm shows a growing trend (7)
3 Plain clothes, 50% like to be in nirvana (9)
4 Part of the capital, only used to grab (5)
5 Play golf, so used to a venture that's doomed to fail (5,4)
6 Amounts to animals eating grass finally (5)
7 "One on the run", song in fashion (1,2,4)
8 Criticize severely for profit abroad - in far east perhaps (4,1,5,3)
9 Serviceman and service personnel - strange to go around base (5,8)
15 Fellowship in motion, tend to protect poor women (9)
17 Extremely measly friend, one among others (9)
19 Under average - cut the root (7)
21 To wine and dine, ending in a sandwich (7)
23 Musical notation goes off around mid morning (5)
25 Symbolic acceptance in 10 (5)

SUDOKU

		6	1			4		7
	7		8	2				
					7		5	8
4			3			9		
7								4
		1			5			3
9	5		6					
				1	8		3	
2		8			4	7		

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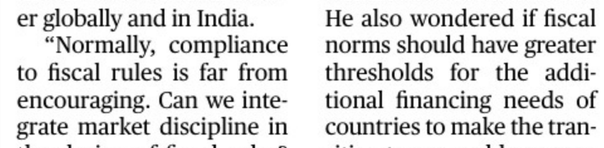
DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

D	A	N	U	B	E		A	M	P	E	R	A	G	E
A		I		L		P		A		S		L		R
T	A	R	P	A	U	L	I	N		S	W	A	R	M
E		V		M		U		I		E		M		I
A	N	A	H	E	I	M		N	A	N	K	E	E	N
B		N		L		B		T			D		E	
L	E	A	S	E		E	T	H	E	R	E	A	L	
E				S		R		E		E				B
	B	A	S	S	I	S	T	S		I	N	F	E	R
C		P				F		T		C		O		A
O	P	E	N	A	I	R		R	E	H	I	R	E	S
G		R		R		I		E		S		M		H
N	I	C	H	E		E	L	E	C	T	R	O	D	E
A		U		N		N		T		A		S		S
C	O	S	T	A	R	D	S		A	G	H	A	S	T

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

2	4	1	8	6	3	7	5	9
8	3	6	5	9	7	4	1	2
9	5	7	2	4	1	6	8	3
6	2	8	7	3	4	5	9	1
7	1	4	9	8	5	2	3	6
3	9	5	1	2	6	8	7	4
1	6	2	3	5	8	9	4	7
5	7	9	4	1	2	3	6	8
4	8	3	6	7	9	1	2	5



FAITH

Prabandha Saaram

Prabandha Saaram is a divine work in Tamil composed by Acharya Sri Vedantha Desika. Koothapakkam Sri Ranganathachariar said in a discourse that great people will start their work with invocation in the first sloka and end with phalashruthi, which is the benefit of the work in the last sloka. Usually, the invocation will contain three parts: "Aaseehi:" – deriving the blessings of elders; "Namaskara:" – paying obeisance to elders and "Vasthu Nirdesaatmakam" – telling about the contents of the proposed work. The Acharya followed these in all his works.

In the first hymn, he gives an outline of what he is going to write. Swami Desika would assign a valid reason behind the number of slokas/verses/hymns in all his works. For instance, his compilation Hayagreeva Stothra contains 32 slokas, reflecting the number of Atma Vidya, and Prabandha Saaram contains 18 hymns, coinciding with 18 parvas in the Mahabharatha and 18 chapters in Srimad Bhagavad Gita.

In hymns 2 to 13 of Prabandha Saaram, the history of all the 12 Azhwars is narrated, including when they were born, the month, the constellations under which they were born, and other details. The Acharya included in the 14th hymn Thiruvarangathamudhanar's Ramanuja Nootrandhathi. It is also called "Prapanna Gayathri."

ASKUS

Vidya Bala

Q I am a 68-year-old retired teacher. I have deposited all my savings and retirement money in various banks in the form of fixed deposits. Now, I want to rejig my deposits and again deposit the money in various nationalised banks at ₹5 lakh apiece. Will this cause tax problems?
I. V. VENU GOPALA RAO

A There is no separate tax implication for breaking deposits, since deposit interest is taxed on accrual (whether payout or cumulative). Breaking a deposit would at best entail some fee or deduction of interest from the bank. So, check the formalities and how much you lose.
We do not know the purpose of rejigging your deposits but if it is to restrict it to insurance cover, here is a small tip: there is little need to reduce your deposit size in large banks fearing that it should not be over ₹5 lakh.
Only if you are banking with small finance banks or other smaller co-operative banks, should you worry about this. Second, nationalised banks do not currently have any edge over private banks when it comes to returning your money. In fact, many of the large private banks have a stronger balance sheet than some of the nationalised ones. In Indian banking history thus far, RBI ensures large banks (called systemically important banks) do not fail and even if they do, the takeover is smooth. So, in the interest of making your tracking and record-keeping simple, make sure you do not have too many bank deposits. If you are rejigging for the purpose of better interest rates, then you may. But here again, keep it compact so that you do not make it difficult for your family later on.

Q I have a dilemma with regard to gold 50% + equity 50% portfolio against bonds 50% + equity 50%. On the face of it, it appears gold has a natural hedge against any inflationary pressure that might hit bond portfolio while providing a good cushion for low-cost borrowing. However, I want to understand these portfolios from these risk perspectives: short, medium (10Y), and long term (20Y).
BALAN

A There are a few things you need to understand about gold, if you are considering it as an investment. Gold is definitely a hedge – not necessarily against inflation – but against the volatility of other asset classes like equity and at times debt. Gold has historically been preferred in periods of economic crisis when equities tend to tumble or when sovereign bonds lose value. So, essentially gold is expected to do well when others are down, thus providing some downside protection to your portfolio.
If you take the rolling 1- and 3- and 5-year returns of gold against bonds between 2014-24 YTD (we took the ICRA Composite Bond Index and ICRA Gilt Index for this purpose), the bond indices have beaten gold on rolling 1-year and 3-year returns and matched gold over 5 years. Besides, the standard deviation of gold (the swing in gold prices from their average for a given period) is significantly higher than bonds.
Finally, the probability of negative returns in gold over 1 and 3-year periods is higher than bonds. Also, the quantum of fall in gold is much higher. For example, the worst returns in gold over rolling 3-year periods for 2014-24 is -8% as opposed to 4.4% for the Composite Bond index and 5% for Gilt.
Essentially, over shorter periods, gold is a volatile commodity asset class, and it is best to use short-duration bonds/ debt funds for shorter periods. However, adding some proportion to gold helps protect portfolio during down markets. Hence, it is not either gold or bonds but having both for portfolios of over 5 years. For less than 5 years, bonds are less volatile than gold.
We usually recommend 10-15% of mutual fund (MF) portfolio in gold provided one does not hold too much physical gold already. On using gold as a means of low-cost borrowing – gold borrowing is not low cost. It is lower than personal loan, yes. These days, you have loan against MFs as well at attractive interest rates. Hence, the need to use only gold for emergencies is not the same now as it was a decade ago.
(The writer is Co-founder, Primeinvestor.in)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.

Conditions apply: Data suggest that out of rejected claims, 25% are due to non-disclosure of pre-existing diseases. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Follow these tips to avoid rejection of health claims

While insurance companies should clearly lay out the terms and conditions applied to the policyholder, the latter should also reciprocate the same by disclosing crucial information

CHECKLIST

Amit Chhabra

Even though the claims process is the most critical aspect of your policy, yet, at the actual time of filing, it might be akin to navigating a complex maze.

Whether it's term or health insurance, any difficulty in getting the claim means that it's the policyholder who ends up bearing the brunt of the process, which eventually erodes the trust in the industry. It is, therefore, better to be informed and prepared with practical solutions for whatever the claims process holds for you.

Here we highlight some common problems faced by consumers and ways to address them.

> Policyholders should take the time to thoroughly review their policy documents, paying close attention to key terms, coverage limits, and exclusions

Lack of understanding
Limited understanding of insurance policies is a common problem faced by policyholders. It might not always be clear what the complex jargon or insurance terms mean.

In fact, Policybazaar's data suggests that close to 50% claims in health insurance get rejected due to a lack of understanding of policies.

Policyholders should take the time to thoroughly review their insurance policy documents, paying close attention to key terms, coverage limits, and exclusions. To help consumers navigate this problem, the IRDAI in October issued the Customer Information Sheet which breaks down and simplifies complex insurance terms for policyholders.

The sheet includes coverage details, waiting period and other exclusions. It's of utmost importance that policyholders seek clarification from their insurance provider. Additionally, utilising online resources or consulting a trusted insurance advisor can help policyholders gain a better understanding of their coverage.

Gathering documents
The claims process typically requires policyholders to submit various documents to support their claims, ranging from medical records and receipts to police reports and witness statements. The process might also vary from one insurer to another.

The first step should be to approach the insurer for grievance redressal. If you are unable to arrange a particular document, discuss with them a possible alternative for it.

Make sure you submit the originals of documents pertaining to identity and address proof. To avoid any misunderstanding, understand from your insurer provider in advance about the documents needed at the time of claim. It's best to create a digital folder to store all the relevant documents and make sure it's easily accessible.

In the case of health and term policies, ensure that your nominee/family members are well aware of this folder since they'll be the ones who'll be required to take care of the documentation.

Delays and rejections
Policyholders often encounter delays or even rejection during the claims process, ranging from lengthy processing times to requests for additional information and red tape.

The regulatory body is increasingly making consumer-centric policies to simplify the insurance process for policyholders.

The guidelines advise you to first register a complaint with the insurer who, as per regulatory mandates, is required to resolve your concern within two weeks.

In fact, if the resolution is unsatisfactory, you can also approach the IRDAI regarding the same. If your claim ends up being rejected and your concern remains unresolved, you can also intimate your concern to the insurance ombudsman within one year of the claim rejection.

However, to prevent the situation from getting to this stage, it's better to maintain a proactive line of communication with the insurer.

Lack of transparency
Insurance is a product that works on utmost good faith and so, trust and transparency are non-negotiable elements of this product. This just doesn't apply to insurance companies but also to policyholders. For instance, data also suggest that out of rejected claims, 25% are due to non-disclosure of pre-existing diseases like Diabetes or Hypertension by policyholders.

It's important that both insurer and policyholder are transparent in their dealing and disclose all necessary information to avoid rejection of a claim. While insurance companies should clearly lay out the terms and conditions applied to the policyholder, the latter should also reciprocate the same by disclosing crucial information like pre-existing conditions, smoking habits or other lifestyle choices that may have a direct impact on your claim.

Often, unjustified hospitalisation also leads to claim rejection which happens where policyholders can't show a strong link between the hospitalisation and the medical necessity.

In a nutshell, it is important to understand the policy terms clearly, organise documentation, and maintain open communication with the insurer.

(The writer is Chief Business Officer - Health Insurance, Policybazaar.com)

Maintain two demat accounts

THINKINVESTOR

To ensure annual rebalancing does not conflict with active trading decisions, it is best to maintain two separate demat accounts – one account in spouse's name and the other account in your name

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

Previously, we discussed why spousal involvement is crucial for maintaining good financial health. In this article, we discuss how spousal involvement can help in efficiently managing family's equity investments.

Two accounts
You must invest in equity for two reasons. One, equity investments via Exchange-traded Funds (ETFs) or mutual funds (MFs) are an important part of goal-based portfolio. If you were to pursue three goals at any point in time, you must have three different ETFs or three different MFs. And two, you must consider direct investment in stocks for your trading portfolio. This is important to capture short-term price movements in the stock market.

Annual rebalancing
The point is you must actively manage both equity investments. Take goal-based investments. If your investments earn more than the expected return, say, 12% in any year, you must sell your ETFs or redeem MF units to take profits above 12%. For example, if an investment of ₹10 lakh earned 14% return, sell or redeem units to take out 2% of ₹10 lakh and invest in bank deposits. This is referred to as annual rebalancing.
Your trading portfolio requires more active management. You must actively buy/ sell shares to capture short-term price movements in the market.

To ensure your annual rebalancing does not conflict with active trading decisions, it is best to maintain two separate demat accounts – one account in spouse's name and the other in your name. If you are the active trader, your demat account should be used for trading portfolio; your spouse's account can be used for setting up SIPs on ETFs or MFs.

Conclusion
There are two benefits of having you and your spouse manage a demat account each. One, you could be tempted to divert more savings into your trading portfolio by redeeming units in your MFs or selling ETFs. It is not optimal to transfer proceeds from goal-based portfolios to trading portfolio, even if you are a successful trader. With two separate demat accounts, you must first convince your spouse to divert the proceeds. And two, a separate demat account for SIPs helps maintain a trail of the proceeds from annual rebalancing and to invest in bank deposits. Also, it helps when you want to invest more to bridge any shortfall in accumulated wealth to achieve your goals.
(The author offers training programs for individuals to manage their personal investments)

Personal Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
HDFC Bank	10.50 onwards	10,747 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to Rs 4,999
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 5.5%
State Bank of India	11.15-15.30	10,909-11,974	2,182-2,395	NIL
ICICI Bank	10.80 onwards	10,821 onwards	2,164 onwards	Up to 2.50%
Bank of Baroda	11.05-18.75	10,884-12,902	2,177-2,580	Up to 2% (min Rs 1,000 and max Rs 10,000)
Axis Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to 2%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3%
Bank of India	10.75-14.75	10,809-11,829	2,162-2,366	Up to 1% (Maximum Rs 5,000)
Canara Bank	10.95-16.40	10,859-12,266	2,172-2,453	0.50% (Maximum Rs 2,500)
Punjab National Bank	10.40-17.95	10,772-12,683	2,144-2,537	Up to 1%
HSBC Bank	9.99-16.00	10,621-12,159	2,124-2,432	Up to 2%
Federal Bank	11.49 onwards	10,994 onwards	2,199 onwards	Up to 3%
Union Bank of India	11.35-15.45	10,959-12,013	2,192-2,403	Up to 1% (Maximum Rs 7,500)
Bajaj Finserv	11.00 onwards	10,871 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3.93%
Punjab & Sind Bank	10.75-13.50	10,809-11,505	2,162-2,301	Up to 1%
South Indian Bank	12.85-20.60	11,338-13,414	2,268-2,683	Up to 2%
UCO Bank	12.45-12.85	11,236-11,338	2,247-2,268	Nil
IDFC First Bank	10.75 onwards	10,809 onwards	2,162 onwards	Up to 3.5%
Bank of Maharashtra	10.00-12.80	10,624-11,325	2,125-2,265	1% (Rs 1,000-Rs 10,000)
Karnataka Bank	13.43	11,487	2,297	Up to 2% of loan amount (Min. Rs 2,500 & Max. Rs 8,500)
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	1.5% -3.5%

Car Loans

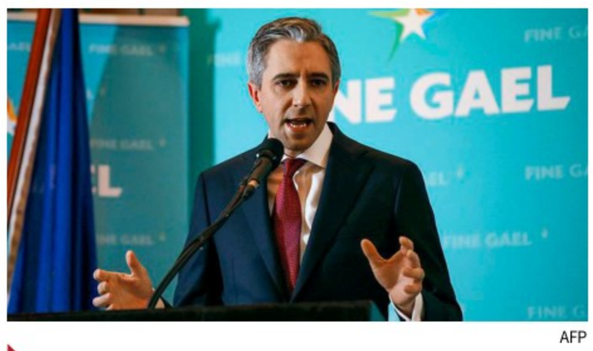
Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
Union Bank of India	8.70 - 10.45	10,307 - 10,735	Rs 1,000
Punjab National Bank	8.75 - 10.60	10,319 - 10,772	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 1,500)
Bank of Baroda	8.80 - 12.70	10,331 - 11,300	Up to Rs 2,000
Canara Bank	8.70 - 12.70	10,307 - 11,300	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 5,000)
Bank of India	8.75 - 10.75	10,319 - 10,809	Nil
UCO Bank	8.45 - 10.55	10,246 - 10,759	Nil
State Bank of India	8.75 - 9.80	10,319 - 10,554	Up to Rs 1,500
IDBI Bank	8.80 - 9.60	10,331 - 10,525	Rs 2,500
Bank of Maharashtra*	8.70 - 13.00	10,307 - 11,377	Nil
Indian Overseas Bank**	8.85 - 12.00	10,343 - 11,122	0.50% (Rs 500 - Rs 5,000)
ICICI Bank	9.10 onwards	10,403 onwards	Rs 999 - Rs 8,500
HDFC Bank	9.20 onwards	10,428 onwards	0.50% (Rs 3,500 - Rs 8,000)
Karnataka Bank	8.88 - 11.37	10,350 - 10,964	0.60% (Rs 3,000 - Rs 11,000)
Federal Bank	8.85 onwards	10,343 onwards	Rs 2,000 - Rs 4,500
South Indian Bank	8.75 onwards	10,319 onwards	0.75% (Max: Rs 10,000)
IDFC First Bank	9.50 onwards	10,501 onwards	Up to Rs 10,000
City Union Bank	14.45 - 14.95	11,751 - 11,882	1.25% (Min: Rs 1,000)

*0.25% interest rate concession for existing housing loan borrowers and corporate salary account holders
**0.50% interest rate concession to borrowers with credit scores of 750 and above. Interest rate concession of 0.20% to borrowers for financing Electric 4 Wheelers. 0.20% concession to existing Housing Loan Borrowers

Rates and charges as on April 3 **Source: Paisabazaar.com**

LONDON

Irish unification is a 'legitimate aspiration', but not priority: Harris



AFP

Simon Harris, who is set to become Ireland's youngest ever Prime Minister, said on Sunday Irish unification was a "legitimate political aspiration" but not a priority for him as leader. He has said his focus will be on "law and order", crafting a "planned and sustainable" immigration policy and fighting "against dangers of populism". AFP

MOSCOW

Water level in Russia's Orsk 'critical' as Kremlin warns of more floods

AP

A major flood in the Russia's Orsk forced thousands to evacuate, with Moscow reporting a "critical" situation on Sunday and warning of dangerous water levels in Siberia. Russia introduced a "federal emergency" situation in southern Orenburg, where the Ural river has flooded Orsk and now threatens the main city of Orenburg. AFP

BEIJING

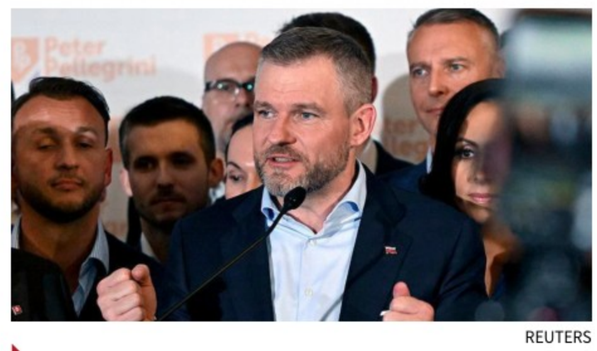
China conducts 'combat patrols' as U.S., allies hold maritime drills

AFP

China held "combat patrols" on Sunday in the South China Sea, the same day the Philippines, the U.S., Japan and Australia conducted their first joint drills in the disputed waters. The maritime activities took place days before U.S. President Joe Biden was due to hold the first trilateral summit with leaders of the Philippines and Japan. AFP

BRATISLAVA

Ukraine-sceptic Pellegrini wins Slovakia presidential election



REUTERS

Ukraine-sceptic government ally Peter Pellegrini won Slovakia's presidential election on Saturday against pro-Western diplomat Ivan Korcok. Opposition-backed Mr. Korcok conceded defeat as nearly complete results showed he had received 47% of the vote against former Prime Minister Pellegrini's 53%. AFP

Israel strikes Hezbollah sites in east Lebanon

Agence France-Presse
BEIRUT

Israel's military said on Sunday its warplanes had struck Hezbollah sites in eastern Lebanon, where the Iran-backed group has a strong presence, in retaliation for one of its drones being downed.

A source close to Hezbollah said in eastern Lebanon's Baalbek region that the strikes targeted Janta and Sifri in the Bekaa Valley, around 80 km from the closest Israeli frontier.

The Israeli military said the strikes were "in retaliation for the attack" in which an Army "drone was shot down" by a surface-to-air missile on Saturday.

A source from Lebanon's civil defence said there were no casualties.

Israel to pull back some troops from South Gaza as war crosses six months

Forces will recuperate and prepare for future operations while a significant number remain elsewhere in Gaza, an Israeli official says; talks for a ceasefire in exchange for the release of Hamas-held hostages expected to resume in Egypt

Associated Press
JERUSALEM

Israel's military announced on Sunday it was drawing back some forces from a Hamas stronghold in southern Gaza following a major phase of its offensive, bringing troop presence in the territory to one of the lowest levels since the six-month war began.

The forces will recuperate and prepare for future operations while a significant number remain elsewhere in Gaza, said Israeli military officials who spoke on condition of anonymity. The 98th paratroopers division operated around Khan Younis, Israel's main focus in recent months.

Ground zero: Men walk with an animal-drawn cart carrying salvaged wood beside destroyed buildings in Khan Younis. AFP

Israel has vowed a ground offensive on the southernmost Gaza city of Rafah, considered Hamas' last stronghold, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday told his Cabinet that victory means "elimination of Hamas in the entire Gaza Strip, including Rafah."

But Rafah shelters some 1.4 million people – more than half of Gaza's population. The prospect of an offensive has raised global alarm, including from top ally the U.S., which has demanded to see a credible plan to protect civilians.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby told ABC the U.S. believes that the partial Israeli withdrawal "is really just about rest and refit for these troops that have been on the ground for four months and not necessarily, that we can tell, indicative of some coming new operation for these troops."

Israel's military quietly drew down troops in devastated northern Gaza earlier in the war.

The six-month mark has been met with growing frustration in Israel, where anti-government protests have swelled and anger is mounting over what some see as government inaction to help free about 130 remaining hostages. Hamas-led militants took about 250 captives when they crossed from Gaza into Israel on October 7 and killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians.

Negotiations in pursuit of a cease-fire in exchange for the hostages' release were expected to resume in Cairo on Sunday.

The Health Ministry in Gaza said 33,175 have been killed since the war began.

Better prospects: Janet Yellen meets Chinese Premier Li Qiang at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Sunday. AFP

'U.S.-China ties are on stable footing but more can be done'

Associated Press
BEIJING

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen sent a message of mutual cooperation at a meeting on Sunday with Chinese Premier Li Qiang, highlighting the improvement in relations since her visit to China last year while recognising that major differences remain.

After focusing on trade and economic issues for the first two days of her visit, Ms. Yellen turned to the broader U.S.-China relationship in the meeting with Mr. Li, one of China's top leaders.

"While we have more to do, I believe that, over the past year, we have put our bilateral relationship on more stable footing," she said in the ornate Fujian room of the Great Hall of the People on the west side of Tiananmen Square.

'High expectations'

Ms. Yellen, who is regarded favourably in China, is the first Cabinet member to visit since Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping met in California in the U.S. in November in a carefully orchestrated meeting to set the troubled relationship between their countries on a better course.

Mr. Li, in remarks before the media before their meeting, said the high media interest in Ms. Yellen's visit "shows the high expectation they have ... and also the expectation and hope to grow" the U.S.-China relationship.

At their meeting, Mr. Li told Ms. Yellen that China hopes the U.S will not politicise economic and trade issues or overstretch the definition of national security, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

China's sharp rise in trade with the Kremlin has increased since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. While China does not provide weapons to Russia, the U.S. has expressed concern about China's sale of items to Russia that can have military as well as civilian uses.

During a press conference on Saturday, Ms. Yellen addressed the U.S. relationship with China on the subject of Russia.

"We think there's more to do, but I do see it as an area where we've agreed to cooperate and we've already seen some meaningful progress," she said. "They understand how serious an issue this is to us."

Paramilitary attack on Sudan village kills 25 and wounds 200

Agence France-Presse
RED SEA STATE

Sudanese paramilitary forces have killed at least 25 people in an attack on a village south of the capital Khartoum, a local activists' committee said on Sunday.

The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) "attacked the village of Um Adam" 150 km south of the city on Saturday, said a statement from the local resistance committee.

Sudan's war between the military, under Army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the RSF, commanded by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, began last April 15.

Many thousands of people have been killed, including up to 15,000 in a single town in the war-ravaged Darfur region. The war has also displaced 8.5 million people.

Saturday's attack resulted in "over 200 wounded, and more than 20 martyrs," the statement said.

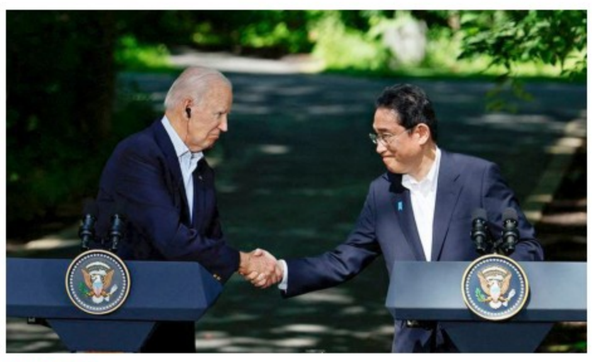
Five of the wounded succumbed to their injuries, bringing the death toll to 25, the committee said.

'U.S., Britain, Australia mulling expansion of AUKUS security pact to counter China'

Reuters
LONDON

The U.S., Britain and Australia are set to begin talks on bringing new members into their AUKUS security pact as Washington pushes for Japan to be involved as a deterrent against China, the *Financial Times* reported.

The countries' Defence Ministers will announce discussions on Monday on "Pillar Two" of the pact, which commits the members to jointly developing quantum computing, undersea, hypersonic, artificial intelligence and cyber technology, the newspaper reported on Saturday.



Wild card: Joe Biden and Fumio Kishida may discuss Japan's inclusion into the AUKUS when the two meet this week. REUTERS

They are not considering expanding the first pillar, which is designed to deliver nuclear-powered attack submarines to Australia.

AUKUS, formed by the three countries in 2021, is part of their efforts to push back against China's growing power in the Indo-Pacific region.

Rahm Emanuel, the U.S. Ambassador in Tokyo, wrote in an opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal* on Wednesday that Japan was "about to become the first additional Pillar II partner".

U.S. President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will likely discuss expanding AUKUS to include Japan when the President hosts the Prime Minister in Washington on Wednesday, a source said.

Sport

Liverpool needs late goal from Salah to escape with a draw at United

PREMIER LEAGUE

Reuters
MANCHESTER

Mohamed Salah scored a late equaliser from a penalty kick as Liverpool escaped Old Trafford with a single point in a 2-2 draw with Manchester United to climb to even on points with Premier League leader Arsenal.

Salah stroked home in the 84th minute for his sixth league goal at Old Trafford, the most of any visiting player in the league's history, overtaking Steven Gerrard's five.

With seven games remaining in the neck-and-neck title race, Liverpool and Arsenal have 71 points with the Gunners leading on goal difference. Holder Manchester City is third on 70 points, while United is sixth.

The equaliser: Salah draws Liverpool level against United. GETTY IMAGES

Luis Diaz got Liverpool on the scoreboard in the 23rd minute when Dominik Szoboszlai swung in a corner that Darwin Nunez headed to the unmarked Colombian who hooked in a volley from close range.

But Bruno Fernandes scored a wild goal in the 50th minute when he latched on to a loose Liverpool pass and lobbed the ball from the centre circle past keeper Caoimhin Kelleher.

Kobbie Mainoo had the Old Trafford faithful roaring with his rocket from just inside the 18-yard box that sailed into the far top corner in the 67th minute.

Liverpool was then awarded its penalty when Harvey Elliott was taken down in the box.

The results: Premier League: Manchester United 2 (Fernandes 50, Mainoo 67) drew with Liverpool 2 (Diaz 23, Salah 84-pen).
Serie A: Frosinone 0 drew with Bologna 0.
On Saturday: Bundesliga: Borussia Dortmund 0 lost to Stuttgart 1 (Guirassy 64).
Serie A: Roma 1 (Mancini 42) bt Lazio 0; Empoli 3 (Cambiaghi 6, Cancellieri 74, Niang 90+4) bt Torino 2 (Zapata 60, 90+1).

Verstappen leads Red Bull to a 1-2 finish

JAPANESE GP

Reuters
SUZUKA

World champion Max Verstappen got back to winning ways on Sunday with a third straight pole-to-flag victory at the Japanese Formula One Grand Prix, leading team mate Sergio Perez across the line for a Red Bull 1-2 at Suzuka.

The Dutchman suffered his first retirement since 2022 in Melbourne last time out to snap a nine-race winning streak but had no mechanical issues this week in a dominant performance to make it three wins from four races this season.

Verstappen, who becomes only the second driver to win three consecutive Japanese Grands Prix alongside seven-times World champion Michael Schumacher, now has a 13-point lead in the driver standings over Perez.

Bubbly time: Ferrari's Sainz dunks winner Verstappen of Red Bull in champagne after the latter's winning drive. AP

Red Bull leads the constructor standings on 141 points ahead of Ferrari (120) and McLaren (69).

Ferrari's other driver Carlos Sainz, the winner in Australia two weeks ago, rode fresher tyres in the latter stages of the race to grab the final podium spot, edging out Leclerc, who used a one-stop strategy.

But the Spaniard was more than 20 seconds behind Verstappen, underlining the gap between the teams in dry, sunny conditions.

McLaren's Lando Norris finished fifth with the Mercedes pair of George Russell and Hamilton down in a disappointing seventh and ninth respectively after a tactical strategy to switch to hard tyres early in the race backfired.

The results:
Verstappen (Red Bull) 1h:54m:23.566s; 2. Perez (Red Bull) + 12.535s; 3. Sainz (Ferrari) 20.866, 4. Leclerc (Ferrari) 26.522; 5. Norris (McLaren) 29.700; 6. Alonoso (Aston Martin) 44.272; 7. Russell (Mercedes) 45.951; 8. Piastri (McLaren) 47.525; 9. Hamilton (Mercedes) 48.626, +1 lap: 10. Tsunoda (RB F1); 11. Hulkenberg (Haas); 12. Stroll (Aston Martin); 13. Magnussen (Haas); 14. Bottas (Sauber); 15. Ocon (Alpine); 16. Gasly (Alpine); 17. Sargeant (Williams); DNF: Ricciardo (RB F1); Albon (Williams); Guanyu (Sauber)
Standings: Drivers: 1. Verstappen 77; Perez 64, 3. Leclerc 59, 4. Sainz 55; 5. Norris 37.
Constructors: 1. Red Bull 141; 2. Ferrari 120; 3. McLaren 69; 4. Mercedes 34; 5. Aston Martin 33.

CLEAR MINDSET

Pollard asked me to express myself and that's what I did: Shepherd

EMMANUAL YOGINI

MI batting coach Kieron Pollard was among the first to give Romario Shepherd a big hug after the hosts tasted their first win in IPL 2024. "When I got a call that I was going to play today, he told me to express myself. Obviously, I went out there with a clear mindset knowing that the coaching staff was backing me," said Shepherd.

CHEERS NOT JEERS

No boos directed at Hardik during Capitals contest

EMMANUAL YOGINI

There was some reprieve for Hardik Pandya at last as the Mumbai Indians captain did not face crowd hostility at the Wankhede Stadium during the clash against Delhi Capitals on Sunday. With the stands mostly filled with children from various NGOs, the noise was all about cheering for the home team.

GETTING WORSE

Losses and injuries making it difficult for Pant's Capitals

FILE PHOTO

Delhi Capitals has been dealing with injury woes and according to assistant coach Praveen Amre, Mukesh Kumar should be available for the next game. A groin strain will keep Kuldeep Yadav out for "a game or two". The biggest concern is Mitchell Marsh, *in pic,* who injured his hamstring. "Once the scan results are out, we will know."

EDUCATION AND SPORTS FOR ALL

18000 schoolkids in attendance for the Mumbai-Delhi clash

EMMANUAL YOGINI

MI owners brought 18,000 schoolkids through various NGOs to see the match under its Education and Sports For All initiative on Sunday. "Maybe one of these kids will reach the pinnacle of sport. I hope they take back cherished memories from this experience and the power to believe in their dreams," said Nita Ambani.

David-Shepherd blast off at the death gives MI new life

The West Indian smashes 32 runs off Nortje in the 20th over; the duo adds 84 in the final four overs to power the hosts to a gargantuan total of 234; Shaw, Stubbs knocks go in vain for DC

IPL-17

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

Sweet smell of success: After a poor start, Hardik & Co. finally got it right. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Tim David and Romario Shepherd's carnage in the last four overs helped Mumbai Indians kick start the Marathi New Year celebrations two days in advance by opening its account in IPL 2024.

Riding on David and Shepherd's cameos, Mumbai Indians ensured Rohit Sharma and Ishan Kishan's panache in the PowerPlay was converted into a gargantuan total of 234 for five after being put in by Rishabh Pant at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday.

Despite Prithvi Shaw's and Tristan Stubbs' swashbuckling knocks, the Capitals finished its essay at 205 for eight, falling short by 29 runs. The difference, in the end, turned out to be the last over of both the innings.

Shepherd, who took guard with 13 balls remaining, hammered Anrich Nortje for four towering sixes and two fours to amass 32 runs off the last over. More than one that went out of the stadium through deep square-leg, it was his slash over covers into the stands that resulted in the full house going berserk.

Thanks to Shepherd's onslaught, Nortje's Protean counterpart Gerald Coetzee had the cushion of defending 33 runs in the last over. He picked up three wickets for four runs, beginning a lap of honour to acknowledge 18,000 schoolkids who had been invited to watch the game.

Earlier, Rohit and Kishan made the most of the PowerPlay, with MI racing to 75 for no loss. Capitals employed five bowlers in the first six overs but none of them could stop the duo's onslaught. Rohit's successive pick-up shorts from outside off stump that landed in the stands over square leg off Jhye Richardson were marvellous.

Axar Patel broke the partnership, outsmarting Rohit with a quicker one that crashed into the stumps.

The wily spinner then took a sensational return catch to send back Kishan.

Capitals kept Hardik Pandya, promoted to No. 4, in check as MI was placed at 150 for four in 16 overs. David then started the carnage with Shepherd joining in to help Mumbai Indians slaughter the last four overs for 84 and take the game away from Capitals.

SCOREBOARD

MUMBAI INDIANS
Rohit Sharma b Axar 49 *(27b, 6x4, 3x6)*, Ishan Kishan c & b Axar 42 *(23b, 4x4, 2x6)*, Suryakumar Yadav c sub (Fraser-McGurk) b Nortje 0 *(2b)*, Hardik Pandya c sub (Fraser-McGurk) b Nortje 39 *(33b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Tilak Varma c Axar b Khaleel 6 *(5b, 1x4)*, Tim David (not out) 45 *(21b, 2x4, 4x6)*, Romario Shepherd (not out) 39 *(10b, 3x4, 4x6)*; Extras (nb-1, w-13): 14; Total (for five wkts. in 20 overs): 234.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-80 (Rohit, 6.6 overs), 2-81 (Suryakumar, 7.3), 3-111 (Kishan, 10.2), 4-121 (Tilak, 12.4), 5-181 (Hardik, 17.5).

CAPITALS BOWLING
Khaleel 4-0-39-1, Ishant 3-0-40-0, Richardson 4-0-40-0, Axar 4-0-35-2, Lalit 1-0-15-0, Nortje 4-0-65-2.

DELHI CAPITALS
Prithvi Shaw b Bumrah 66 *(40b, 8x4, 3x6)*, David Warner c Hardik b Shepherd 10 *(8b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Abhishek Porel c David b Bumrah 41 *(31b, 5x4)*, Tristan Stubbs (not out) 71 *(25b, 3x4, 7x6)*, Rishabh Pant c Hardik b Coetzee 1 *(3b)*, Axar Patel run out 8 *(7b, 1x4)*, Lalit Yadav c Kishan b Coetzee 3 *(4b)*, Kumar Kushagra (**Impact Player in place of Khaleel**) c Tilak b Coetzee 0 *(1b)*, Jhye Richardson c Rohit b Coetzee 2 *(2b)*; Extras (lb-1, nb-1, w-1): 3; Total (for eight wkts. in 20 overs): 205.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-22 (Warner, 3.4), 2-110 (Shaw, 11.5), 3-144 (Porel, 14.6), 4-153 (Pant, 15.6), 5-194 (Axar, 18.4), 6-203 (Lalit, 19.3), 7-203 (Kushagra, 19.4), 8-205 (Richardson, 19.6).

MUMBAI INDIANS BOWLING
Coetzee 4-0-34-4, Bumrah 4-0-22-2, Madhwal (**Impact Player in place of Suryakumar**) 4-0-45-0, Shepherd 4-0-54-1, Nabi 2-0-17-0, Chawla 2-0-32-0.

Toss: DC; **PoM:** Shepherd.
MI won by 29 runs.

Next assignment

MI: April 11 vs **RCB**
Mumbai, 7.30 p.m.

DC: April 12 vs **LSG**
Lucknow, 7.30 p.m.

Yash Thakur, spinners wreak havoc as Super Giants overpower Titans

M.R. Praveen Chandran
LUCKNOW

Super Giant: Yash Thakur provided the breakthrough as well as the knockout punch. SANDEEP SAXENA

Gujarat Titans collapsed spectacularly against pace and spin as Lucknow Super Giants broke its losing run to the former in the IPL with a 33-run win at the Ekana Cricket Stadium here on Sunday.

Titans' biggest threat Mayank Yadav bowled only one over and went off the field but it found the man of the hour in seamer Yash Thakur whose fine spell (five for 30) destroyed the visiting side.

Chasing a target of 164, Titans were bundled out for 130. Left-arm spinner Krunal Pandya (three for 11) and leggie Ravi Bishnoi (one for eight) dealt crippling blows from which Titans never recovered.

There was not an inkling of what was to follow when Titans were given a rousing start by openers Shubman Gill and Sai Sudharsan.

Crucial strike

The stage was set for the visitors to take control but Yash Thakur's final ball in the PowerPlay turned the contest on its head.

The pacer cleaned up Gill for 19 while Impact Player Kane Williamson (1) left without making an impact, falling to a superb flying return catch by Bishnoi in the seventh over.

Krunal prised out Sai Sudharsan (31) and B.R. Sharath (2) in his first over as Titans slumped to 61 for four.

Double-wicket maiden

Yash Thakur came back to dismiss Vijay Shankar (17) and Rashid Khan (0) in a double-wicket maiden over to push Titans to the brink (93 for seven).

In what turned out to be the final over of the game, Yash Thakur removed heavy-hitter Tewatia (30), who was caught by Nicholas Pooran in the deep. The bowler completed his five-wicket haul when Noor Ahmad was caught by Quinton de Kock, signalling a win for the hosts.

Earlier, the Titans bowlers impaired Super Giants early in the PowerPlay and the spinners stifled the scoring in the middle overs before Pooran (32 n.o., 22b, 3x6) broke the shackles with his customary finish and took Super Giants to a total of 163 for five.

Umesh Yadav scalped two wickets in his first two overs to rattle Super Giants before skipper K.L. Rahul (33) and Marcus Stoinis (58) added 73 for the third wicket to put the innings back on track

Pooran and Ayush Badoni (20) provided the impetus and powered the Lucknow outfit to a score that proved more than adequate.

SCOREBOARD

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS
Quinton de Kock c Noor b Umesh 6 *(4b, 1x6)*, K.L. Rahul c Tewatia b Nalkande 33 *(31b, 3x4)*, Devdutt Padikkal c Vijay Shankar b Umesh 7 *(7b, 1x4)*, Marcus Stoinis c Sharath b Nalkande 58 *(43b, 4x4, 2x6)*, Nicholas Pooran (not out) 32 *(22b, 3x6)*, Ayush Badoni c Umesh b Rashid 20 *(11b, 3x4)*, Krunal Pandya (not out) 2 *(2b)*; Extras (lb-4, w-1): 5; Total (for five wkts. in 20 overs): 163.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-6 (de Kock, 0.4 overs), 2-18 (Padikkal, 2.2), 3-91 (Rahul, 12.4), 4-112 (Stoinis, 14.5), 5-143 (Badoni, 18.1).

TITANS BOWLING
Umesh 3-0-22-2, Johnson 4-0-32-0, Rashid 4-0-28-1, Mohit 3-0-34-0, Noor 4-0-22-0, Nalkande 2-0-21-2.

GUJARAT TITANS
B. Sai Sudharsan c Bishnoi b Krunal 31 *(23b, 4x4)*, Shubman Gill b Yash Thakur 19 *(21b, 2x4)*, Kane Williamson (**Impact Player in place of Mohit**) c & b Bishnoi 1 *(5b)*, B.R. Sharath c Badoni b Krunal 2 *(5b)*, Vijay Shankar c Rahul b Yash Thakur 17 *(17b, 1x6)*, Darshan Nalkande c Yash Thakur b Krunal 12 *(11b, 1x6)*, Rahul Tewatia c Pooran b Yash Thakur 30 *(25b, 2x4, 2x6)*, Rashid Khan c sub (Hooda) b Yash Thakur 0 *(3b)*, Umesh Yadav c de Kock b Naveen 2 *(4b)*, Spencer Johnson (not out) 0 *(1b)*, Noor Ahmad c de Kock b Yash Thakur 4 *(2b, 1x4)*; Extras (lb-2, nb-4, w-6): 12; Total (in 18.5 overs): 130.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-54 (Gill, 5.6), 2-56 (Williamson, 7.2), 3-58 (Sai Sudharsan, 8.1), 4-61 (Sharath, 8.5), 5-80 (Nalkande, 12.1), 6-93 (Vijay Shankar, 14.2), 7-93 (Rashid, 14.5), 8-102 (Umesh, 15.6), 9-126 (Tewatia, 18.3).

SUPER GIANTS BOWLING
M. Siddharth (**Impact Player in place of Stoinis**) 4-0-29-0, Naveen 4-0-37-1, Mayank Yadav 1-0-13-0, Yash Thakur 3.5-1-30-5, Krunal 4-0-11-3, Bishnoi 2-0-8-1.

Toss: Super Giants.
PoM: Yash Thakur.
LSG won by 33 runs.

Next assignment

GT: April 10 vs **RR**
Jaipur, 7.30 p.m.

LSG: April 12 vs **DC**
Lucknow, 7.30 p.m.

Points table

	M	W	L	PTS	NRR
Rajasthan Royals	4	4	0	8	1.120
Kolkata Knight Riders	3	3	0	6	2.518
Lucknow Super Giants	4	3	1	6	0.775
Chennai Super Kings	4	2	2	4	0.517
Sunrisers Hyderabad	4	2	2	4	0.409
Punjab Kings	4	2	2	4	-0.220
Gujarat Titans	5	2	3	4	-0.797
Mumbai Indians	4	1	3	2	-0.704
Royal Challengers	5	1	4	2	-0.843
Delhi Capitals	5	1	4	2	-1.370

The week ahead

April 8	CSK vs KKR	Chennai	7.30 p.m.
April 9	PBKS vs SRH	Mullanpur	7.30 p.m.
April 10	RR vs GT	Jaipur	7.30 p.m.
April 11	MI vs RCB	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.
April 12	LSG vs DC	Lucknow	7.30 p.m.
April 13	PBKS vs RR	Mullanpur	7.30 p.m.
April 14	KKR vs LSG	Kolkata	3.30 p.m.
April 14	MI vs CSK	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.

CSK faces uphill task against KKR

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

Back in the mix: Pathirana at a practice session on Sunday. R. RAGU

It is not often Chennai Super Kings goes into a home game as an underdog, but after two successive defeats on the road, the defending champion faces an uphill task against the unbeaten Kolkata Knight Riders when the two sides meet at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium here on Monday.

The Super Kings have quite a few headaches, and it starts from the top of the order. Skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad has been slow to get off, and Rachin Ravindra, who had an excellent first two games, has been tied down by bowlers moving the ball away from him.

Similarly, in the middle-order, Daryl Mitchell has not set the stage on fire yet, while Ajinkya Rahane has blown hot and cold. On the bowling front, Chennai will need more wickets from Deepak Chahar in the PowerPlay.

The team got a boost on Sunday evening as left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman rejoined the squad and is available for selection.

Meanwhile, KKR is brimming with confidence following three good wins.

The two-time champion has one of the most destructive batting line-ups, scoring more than 200 in two of three games.

KKR has managed to get the best out of Sunil Narine, the batter, as an opener, while Andre Russell has been at his marauding best as a finisher.

Varun Chakravarthy and Narine have been impressive, and if the surface aids the tweakers, the duo can be a handful. The visitors hold an edge even as CSK banks on home comfort to resurrect its campaign.

Today's match

CSK vs KKR
Chennai, 7.30 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 28
CSK 18 | KKR 10

PREVIOUS MEETING
KKR won by six wickets, 2023

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JIO CINEMA

Two losses is not a slide, says Simons

Sankar Narayanan E.H.
CHENNAI

Reigning champion Chennai Super Kings is going through a middling 2024 season (two wins and two losses). However, bowling consultant Eric Simons said there was no panic in the ranks.

"I don't think two losses is a slide yet. There are proactive conversations taking place in the dugout about what we can do," Simons said on Sunday, the eve of the match against Kolkata Knight Riders.

He added that the think-tank is keen on backing its players. "One of our hallmarks is that we don't change personnel that often. If a guy has a bad day, then that's somewhere he can learn and grow."

Simons said the side wanted to ensure that Matheesha Pathirana – who missed the game against Sunrisers Hyderabad – was completely fit and then be pressed into action again.

"We wanted to be conservative with the decision surrounding him. Whether he'll play the next match is up to the physios. But he's coming along very nicely."

KKR assistant coach Abhishek Nayar said the boys were ready for the CSK challenge, whatever the nature of the surface. "The strategy is to play cricket the way you know best... the track doesn't define how you do."

INBRIEF

Uma and Fikir give Ethiopia double win at Paris Marathon

Mulugeta Uma and Mestawut Fikir won the Paris Marathon men's and women's races on Sunday to give Ethiopia a double in the event for the first time in five years. Uma won with a time of 2:05:33, beating Kenyans Titus Kipruto and Elisha Rotich, while Fikir finished with a time of 2:20:45 in her first marathon, pipping compatriot Enat Tirusew to the line by three seconds, while Kenyan Vivian Cheruiyot was third.

Athletic Bilbao wins Copa del Rey, ends 40-year wait

Athletic Bilbao beat Mallorca 4-2 on penalties to end a 40-year wait for its 24th Copa del Rey title on Saturday. Extra time in the final ended 1-1 after Dani Rodríguez gave Mallorca the lead in the 21st minute and Athletic's Oihan Sancet levelled in the 50th.

Messi helps Miami salvage a draw in comeback game

Lionel Messi returned and helped salvage a tie for Inter Miami. Messi scored shortly after checking in to begin the second half and helped set up Leo Afonso's go-ahead score two minutes later. But Cole Bassett scored in the 88th minute for the Colorado Rapids and the game ended in a 2-2 tie on Saturday night.

Berrettini ends drought with Marrakech title

Matteo Berrettini won the ATP 250 tournament in Marrakech on Sunday, beating Spaniard and defending champion Roberto Carballes Baena 7-5, 6-2 in the final. The 27-year-old Italian former World No. 6 was playing in his first final since the one he lost in Naples in October 2022. He has slipped to 135th in the world after a series of physical problems and returned from injury less than a month ago. Berrettini's eighth tour title will lift him back into the ATP top 100.

Gukesh holds Nepomniachtchi, stays in joint lead in the Open section

The duo have Caruana for company; Praggnanandhaa trumps Gujrathi; in the women's event, Humpy holds the leader Tan, while Vaishali gets the better of Salimova for her first win

CANDIDATES CHESS

Sports Bureau

D. Gukesh held defending champion Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia to a draw to remain in the joint lead after the third round of the Candidates chess tournament at Toronto on Saturday. The two rivals for the day and top seed Fabio Caruana have 2.5 points each.

The other overnight leader, Vidit Gujrathi, went down to fellow-Indian R. Praggnanandhaa in what was the only decisive game in the Open section. The 18-year-old from Chennai surprised Gujrathi in the opening before triumphing in 45 moves of a Ruy Lopez Game with black pieces. It was a fine comeback after a defeat to Gukesh in the second round.

There was more good news for Praggnanandhaa as his elder sister R. Vaishali also won after suffering a defeat on the previous day. She defeated Nurgyul Salimova of Bulgaria in the women's tournament.

Holding out: Gukesh chose a solid line against Nepomniachtchi but the latter defended impeccably. FIDE

The other Indian woman in the field, Koneru Humpy, drew with the leader Tan Zhongyi of China, who had won both her games. The Chinese player is still in sole lead, with 2.5 points.

Humpy, who had black pieces, wasn't happy with the game, which ended with the repetition of moves. "I am not really satisfied with the game," said the former World rapid champion. "It is not about the draw, but I couldn't really continue with the game. She is very well prepared."

Vaishali too was well prepared for her game against Salimova. The Indian, who faced Petrov's Defence, sacrificed her knight on her way to 33-move win. "Winning a nice game always feels good," she said afterwards.

The results (third round):
Open: Alireza Firouzja (Fra) 1 drew with Fabiano Caruana (USA) 2; D. Gukesh 2 drew with Ian Nepomniachtchi (FIDE) 2; Vidit Gujrathi 1.5 lost to R. Praggnanandhaa 1.5; Nijat Abasov (Aze) 1 drew with Hikaru Nakamura (USA) 1.
Women: Koneru Humpy 1.5 drew with Tan Zhongyi (Chn) 2.5; Lei Tingjie (Chn) 1 drew with Aleksandra Goryachkina (FIDE) 2; R. Vaishali 1.5 bt Nurgyul Salimova (Bul) 1; Anna Muzychuk (Ukr) 1 drew with Kateryna Lagno (FIDE) 1.5.

India capitulates again to Australia

HOCKEY

Press Trust of India
PERTH

The Indian men's hockey team dished out a much-improved performance as compared to its previous game but still lost 4-2 to Australia in the second Test of the five-match series here on Sunday.

After the 5-1 drubbing on Saturday, the Indians were able to play on equal terms against in the first and second quarters of the match. In fact, India was 2-1 ahead at half time, but some sloppy defending in the third quarter cost it dearly as the hosts pumped in three goals.

The third Test match of the series, titled Perth International Festival of Hockey, will be played here on April 10.

The result: Australia 3 (Jeremy Hayward 6, 34, Jacob Anderson 42, Nathan Ephraums 45) bt India 2 (Jugraj Singh 9, Harmanpreet Singh 30).

To see him perform even against us was a pleasure, says RCB coach Flower

IPL-17

P.K. Ajith Kumar
JAIPUR

Mayank Yadav may have blown away Royal Challengers Bengaluru's batting the other night, but RCB's coach Andy Flower is happy for him. The Zimbabwean had worked with the fast-bowling sensation when he was Lucknow Super Giants' coach.

"I loved working with him," said Flower.

"Andy Bichel initially did some good work with him in the first year. Unfortunately, he picked up a serious injury in the second year I was with LSG, but he has always had pace and we were all very excited about him. To see him perform even against us was an absolute pleasure."

Flower, after his team's six-wicket defeat to Rajasthan Royals, admitted RCB had some issues with the batting. "We have Virat Kohli in superb form, but the other guys are struggling for form and confidence," he said.

High grading: Mayank has impressed his former LSG coach Flower with his exploits. K. MURALI KUMAR

"As you have seen in this competition, scores and aggression of teams are only going one way. So we need that aggression and confidence to put the opposition under pressure."

Shane Bond, RR's assistant coach, said he was delighted for Jos Buttler, who returned to form with a match-winning hundred.

"You know we have been winning games without much from the opening partnership, so it's good to see Buttler at his best," he said.

Youngsters capable of helping India climb up the rankings, says Matic

BASKETBALL

Stan Rayan
KOCHI

India may have slipped badly in FIBA's world basketball rankings in the last 10 years but National chief coach Veselin Matic believes that the country has bright youngsters who are capable of helping the country climb up again. But the country needs to be patient.

From 53 in 2015, the Indian men are now at 82 while the women have also slipped more than 10 rungs to 79. While other countries have invested heavily in basketball and brought about major changes, India has not given the sport the big push.

Young players need to be encouraged and given exposure.

"College basketball, the main force of the country, is not properly organised. And when you go for the senior Nationals, you will not see youngsters playing ... every player is around 30. Only now, some teams have started including young players, like (Harsh) Dagar, Kushal (Singh), (Sahaji) Sekhon after they played for the National team.

Matic. STAN RAYAN

"Before that, anyone who is around 20-21 will not be in the team. That will not move Indian basketball forward. It is important to have a regulation, how many senior players should be in the team (in leagues and nationals) and how many other youngsters can play.

The Indian League INBL ran for just one season and players have not had a league for more than a year. That also affects the country's world rankings.

Foreign players

When the Indian pro league returns, Matic feels that it should have foreign players.

"Other countries have six local players and four foreigners in their league. Australia (which now comes under FIBA Asia like New Zealand) has allowed one Asian player in its league. India also can do that, have an Asian player and an OCI player apart from two other foreigners. Allow two foreigners on the court for limited time, say 25 minutes. You can make such rules for your league," said the Serb who had been the National coach for Iran and Syria earlier.

"And our players don't have exposure, we only go for the organised competition where we must go or FIBA will suspend you."

EBFC pips BFC in a crucial tie, climbs to the sixth spot

ISL-10

Amitabha Das Sharma
KOLKATA

East Bengal preserved its winning form at the expense of Bengaluru FC, with a 2-1 victory, in the Indian Super League at the Salt Lake Stadium here on Sunday.

Saul Crespo got the lead from a penalty in the first half while Cleiton Silva produced the winner late in the second half. Sunil Chhetri, who came in as a second-half substitute, netted from the penalty spot for BFC.

EBFC has climbed to the sixth spot (24 points from 21 matches), dislodging Chennaiyin FC (also on 24 from 20 matches) on a better goal average.

BFC, which stayed on 22 from 21, saw its play-off chances evaporating after the loss.

Clutch goal: Cleiton Silva's 77th minute strike won it for East Bengal. FOCUS SPORTS/ISL

The visitor put in more hard work, but EBFC enjoyed the advantage by finding the only goal of the opening half.

The home side found the lead off a 19th minute penalty conversion after defender Lalremtluanga Fanai tackled EBFC winger Naorem Mahesh Singh from behind.

Crespo came up to score from the spot and EBFC succeeded in denying the aggressive opponent some good scoring chances till the break.

BFC levelled the issue off a penalty at the hour mark, which it earned thanks to some good work in the box by Chhetri.

The Indian captain got his 61st ISL goal but his effort was nixed by the Silva who nodded home an inch-perfect cross from Nishu Kumar in the 77th minute to secure the full points for the home side.

The result: East Bengal 2 (Crespo 19-pen, Silva 77) bt Bengaluru FC 1 (Chhetri 60-pen).

Nagal makes the main draw of Monte Carlo Masters

Press Trust of India
MONTE CARLO

Sumit Nagal became the first Indian to enter the Monte Carlo Masters singles main draw in 42 years, beating Argentina's Diaz Acosta 7-5, 2-6, 6-2 in a three-setter in the final qualifying round here on Sunday.

The 26-year-old Nagal, ranked 95th in the world, emulaed the legendary Ramesh Krishnan, who had made it to the main draw of the same tournament in 1982.

LIVE TELECAST

ISL: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 7.30 p.m.
IPL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 7.30 p.m.
Serie A: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 12. 15 a.m. (Tuesday)

Mohammedan Sporting confident of meeting club-licensing criteria

FOOTBALL

Press Trust of India
KOLKATA

After winning its maiden I-League title, Mohammedan Sporting is now confident of fulfilling the '₹100-crore bank guarantee requirement' that will pave its way to the top-tier Indian Super League next season.

The 133-year-old club, second oldest in Kolkata's *maidan* after Mohun Bagan, will play in the ISL next season, subject to fulfilling Indian Club Licensing System Premier 1 criteria.

"We have already met ISL club licensing criteria which is basically about infrastructure, administration, sporting and financial criteria," Mohammedan Sporting general secretary Ishtiaque Ahmed told PTI.

By virtue of being a promoted club to the ISL, Mohammedan Sporting, unlike Bagan and East Bengal, won't have to cough up the ₹15-crore franchise fee.

"We now just need some bank guarantee and some financial matters that need to be sorted with the investors, which will be done in due course," Ahmed said.

As per guidelines, the new club will have to show a bank guarantee of ₹100 crore to play in the top-tier league, something Punjab FC had done last season.

Gurgaon-based sports management firm Bunker-Hill Pvt. Ltd. has currently 51% stake in the club after inking an eight-year deal amid much fanfare in October 2020.

BENGALURU ROUND-UP

Arif nets twice for Sporting Club Bengaluru

Arif Shaikh scored a brace as Sporting Club Bengaluru beat Dempo Sports Club 3-0 to increase its lead atop I-League 2 table to five points, here on Saturday.

FC Bengaluru United lost its second game in a row, to Sporting Club de Goa 0-1, to remain static on 19 points from 10 matches. Sporting is on 24 points after 10 games.

The results: Sporting Club Bengaluru 3 (Arif Shaikh 1, 90, Chongtham Kishan Singh 13) bt Dempo Sports Club 0.

Sporting Club de Goa 1 (Alister Anthony 52) bt FCBU 0.

Pragathi Gowda signs multi-year development deal Sidvin

Bengaluru-based rally driver Pragathi Gowda signed a multi-year development deal with oil and gas company Sidvin.

Pragathi is a Junior Indian National Rally 2022 champion, winner of the Asia-Pacific Rally Star Cup in 2022, and was named the reserve driver for FIA Rally Star for JWRC in 2023.

She and her co-driver Trisha Alonkar will be participating in upcoming rally championships in Asia and Europe.